

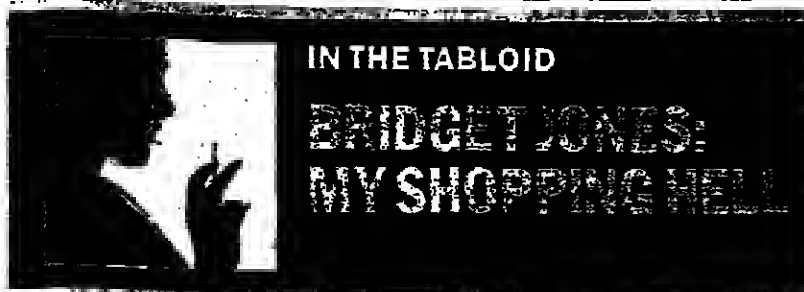


THE INDEPENDENT

Nº 3,266

WEDNESDAY 9 APRIL 1997

WEATHER: Mainly warm and sunny (45p) 40p



IN THE TABLOID

BRIDGET JONES:
MY SHOPPING HELL



IN THE TABLOID

FASHION AND
THE COMPASSIONATE



INTERNATIONAL PAGE 13

THE
SPANISH

Just 70,000 targeted: what about the election's neglected millions?

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

The great gulf of the election campaign was exposed by Paddy Ashdown and church leaders yesterday, with the Liberal Democrat leader accusing Labour of only being interested in 70,000 key-seat voters out of the 44 million registered to vote.

Following a visit to a council estate in south-west London, Mr Ashdown told a Westminster rally last night that he had been to a centre for young single parents - "People who, as the

Council of Churches made clear today, are all too often made the scapegoats by politicians, when what they need is our support.

"These are the people whose concerns have so far been addressed by neither Mr Major nor Mr Blair in this election; for the simple reason that, to these people, they have nothing to say. "These are the people who have been let down, left out and left behind by this Government. And who risk being let down, left out and left behind in this election."

Mr Ashdown said that

Labour had lost its passion, conviction, and its crusade, and was instead directing its campaign, cash and message at the short-term concerns of the 70,000 voters in the marginal seats, who advisers said would swing the election, and Labour into office.

Underlining that point, the churches earlier stepped in where the politicians feared to tread, with a report in which they attacked social division, unemployment and poverty - and criticised all parties, including the Liberal Democrats.

In a report which condemned



Time to talk: Paddy Ashdown listening to families' problems yesterday in Wallington, Sutton, which has a Lib Dem-controlled council. Photograph: John Voos

both public apathy and an over-reliance on the market economy, they called for higher taxation, more public spending, a national minimum wage and reform of the benefits system.

"In the British election campaign the political parties are competing for votes by promising low taxation," the report, *Unemployment and the Future of Work*, said.

"When so many are living in poverty and unemployment, it is wrong to give priority to the claims of those who are already well off. None of the political

parties has put forward a programme which offers much real hope of improvement to those in greatest need."

Members of the inquiry on unemployment and the future of work, conducted for all the main Christian churches in Britain and Ireland, said they were "shocked and saddened" by what they had seen.

Children were growing up in families where unemployment was an inheritance from several generations, they said. While the majority of people had become more prosperous in the

past 18 years, a minority had become much poorer. They called for a programme of public spending to create jobs in health, education, community care, service industries and the building trade, funded by increases in taxes for the better off.

Real jobs should be created for the long-term unemployed, they argued, and a minimum wage should improve the lot of the poorest among the employed. Means testing of benefits should be cut, priority should be given to teaching all young people basic skills and a

national employment forum should be set up.

Andrew Britton, executive secretary of the churches' working party and former director of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, said the "vision of the Kingdom of God" should rule the whole of life including politics and economics.

John Major disagreed with the churches' judgement. "There is no point in wearing your heart on your sleeve if you have nothing in the national wallet with which to help," he said in an interview with Adam

Boulton on Sky News last night. Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor, welcomed the report and claimed it was an indictment of the state of Britain.

"The Conservatives must now answer why they have failed to tackle the huge inner city problems of unemployment and why we face the threat of an underclass in Britain," he said. For the Liberal Democrats, deputy leader Alan Beith said his party offered more than the others to meet the churches' programme.

Election countdown, pages 8-12

Sleaze showdown at Knutsford Corral



Showdown: Neil Hamilton hijacking Martin Bell's press conference at Knutsford yesterday. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

Jojo Moyes

It was as if the OK Corral had come to The Heath at Knutsford. Under the blazing sun stood Martin Bell, prospective independent "anti-corruption" candidate, dressed in white and flanked by former soldier Colonel Bob Stewart.

Facing him stood Conservative candidate Neil Hamilton, flanked by another seasoned fighter - his wife, Christine.

As Mr Bell prepared to launch his campaign in Tatton yesterday afternoon, the previously elusive Mr Hamilton emerged to hijack the war correspondent's press conference because, he muttered as he strode across the green, "he had a few questions of his own."

This small slice of the general election brings daily more bizarre scenes and here, in the Cheshire stockbroker belt, the two veterans, one of bloody battlegrounds and the other of more gentlemanly conflicts, faced each other, surrounded by a heaving circle of reporters and cameramen.

At first it appeared to be an uncommonly polite confrontation.

Mr Hamilton, despite his wife's assertion

that he could not talk "under the Representation of the People's Act" told reporters he had come to help "lay some ground rules" before what looked like a bloody fight.

Mr Bell assured him: "I don't intend to get into the substance of any allegations about you, I intend to talk about trust." It would, he said, be counterproductive.

But then the Hamiltons' more seasoned political skills came into play, and they began what looked like something of a domestic ambush.

"So are you prepared to give me the benefit of the doubt on these allegations?" asked Mr Hamilton.

As Mr Bell faltered, with a gallant "absolutely", Mrs Hamilton repeatedly interjected with: "Do you then accept my husband is innocent?"

If Mr Bell accepted a man's presumed innocence, the Hamiltons rounded, then why was he standing as an "anti-corruption" candidate?

Mr Bell, evidently wishing he had brought his flask jacket, denied this, saying he was standing as an independent. (He later felt obliged to reaffirm his position. "I have not said Mr Hamilton is innocent

of the charges against him. I have said some of the charges are not proven. I'm not going to talk about them.")

Mr Bell defended his "anti-corruption" stand by charging that Mr Hamilton had admitted some wrongdoing in accepting hospitality from Mohammed al Fayed.

"So did Tony Blair and John Prescott," said Mr Hamilton. "Why aren't you standing for Hull or Sedgfield then?"

"I can't stand everywhere," protested Mr Bell.

"You can stand where you want as you're not going to get elected," Mr Hamilton muttered.

The Hamiltons left smiling, having scored some political capital in the confrontation.

Meanwhile, a local taxi driver traded punches with a cameraman on whose stool he had been standing and Col Stewart, former commander of British troops in Bosnia, who had been standing on the sidelines, announced he was there as a character witness.

"Well, that was fun, wasn't it?" said Mr Bell, as he left. The exchange appeared to have given him a taste for the political battle.

Middle East: a dream of peace is dead

Clinton's silence seals the fate of a troubled process

The Middle East peace process is dead. Its defining moment came when President Clinton emerged from his talks with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday night and failed to condemn the new Jewish settlement on occupied land.

Israelis will no doubt claim that terrorism destroyed the Oslo accords. Historians are likely to record that the peace was stillborn the moment the folly of the Oslo agreement - with too much trust and too few guarantees - became known.

But dead it is. It is a service to the truth to say so - a pleasure only for those who believe that history is written in blood. For the West, the peace process has become the despair

of its friends and the delight of its enemies. If the Koran had permitted alcohol, the mullahs of Iran would be drinking champagne tonight - toasting Mr Netanyahu and his new Jewish settlement with each glass.

For everything that we were told would follow Oslo - a Palestinian state, a joint capital in Jerusalem, an end to a hundred years of Middle East war - has turned to dust. And it is a lamentable fact that, once the Palestinians arrive in Washington to hear their fate, they are likely to be presented by Mr Clinton with Israel's conditions for future peace, including the continued construction



ROBERT FISK

of the Jewish settlement. If they accept this, Arafat's men are politically finished. If they reject it, they will be blamed for the death of peace. Thus has Washington's Middle East policy become Israel's.

For just as the settlement at Har Homa was the sword in the

corpse of the peace process - because it destroyed the land-for-peace foundation of 1991 - so America's two vetoes of UN condemnation of the settlement marks the end of US credibility to the region. The final Jewish encirclement of Jerusalem which this represents - which denies any hope of talks on the "final status" of the city - cuts off the head of the corpse of peace.

The reality is now on the streets of Tel Aviv - where a Palestinian bomber murdered three Israeli women - and in Gaza and the West Bank, where another three Palestinians were killed yesterday. There will be

no future for the Americans here unless they place their national interests above Israel's. And they will not do that.

People may say that Arafat promised his people a state and gave them a Bantustan. They may say that Netanyahu promised his people security and presented them with war. The coming days will be a calamity for the brave Palestinians and Israelis who tried to make the flawed agreement work.

Fortune-tellers out a poor trade in the Middle East, but the nightmare of the future must include all-out war between Palestinians and Israelis, rioting in the streets of Arab nations who are supposed to be our

friends and perhaps - through a glass very darkly - a US military intervention. Not to encourage peace but to maintain a ceasefire.

Is all this just a journalist's professional cynicism? I fear not. It is already possible to ask the price of each Jewish house at Har Homa - not in cash but in blood. No doubt the ghosts of rulers past will watch this tragedy: Lawrence of Arabia, Balfour, the founders of Zionism and Arab nationalism, Sadat and Begin, and the dead of four Middle East wars. Winston Churchill, a fervent Zionist in his early years, came to regard Palestine in the dying days of empire as a "hell disaster". His shade may soon repeat these terrible words.

Peace caudron, page 15

QUICKLY

Reform of meat rules

Tough new regulations for every part of the meat industry were unveiled yesterday following recent food-poisoning outbreaks in Scotland which have killed 20 people. Professor Hugh Pennington published the results of

his official inquiry into the *E. coli* outbreaks and recommended wholesale reforms for meat handlers. The recommendations were immediately accepted by Michael Forsyth, the Secretary of State for Scotland, on behalf of the Government. Page 4

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THE BROADSHEET
Business & City20-22
Comment17-19
Crossword28
Foreign News13-15

Home News2-7
Leaders & Letters17
Obituaries16
Shares23
Sport25-28

THE TABLOID
Arts6-7
Arts Reviews23
Bridget Jones3
Concise crossword26

Fashion8-9
Finance14
Listings24,25
Radio & TV27,28
Weather26



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Coastguards sued over Lyme Bay canoe deaths

A damages claim against the Government over the 1993 Lyme Bay canoeing disaster in which four teenagers were drowned has the potential to cost huge sums of money, it emerged yesterday.

A writ just issued against the Department of Transport, which is responsible for the coastguard service, alleges that the youngsters who died would have survived but for negligence by coastguards and that the survivors would not have been injured.

The action has been launched by organisers of the canoeing trip, OLL Ltd, of Ellenborough House, Wellington Street, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. They are seeking an indemnity in respect of compensation they have paid to the families of those who died and to the survivors. Their writ claims that HM Coastguard Portland, Dorset, failed to convey any sense of urgency to Royal Navy helicopters, misinterpreted weather conditions, directed search helicopters to the wrong area and failed to operate an effective chain of command.

Warning for hay fever sufferers

Hay fever misery is set to hit sufferers at least three weeks earlier than usual this year, it was claimed yesterday.

The high March temperatures have hastened the production of tree pollen, particularly in southern England and the Midlands, according to hay fever treatment manufacturers Beconase, and as a result, millions of people can soon expect to suffer sneezing fits and sore eyes. Beconase said information from the Pollen Research Unit showed that the peak of the tree pollen season was expected to occur over the next two weeks in the South and Midlands, and over the next three to four weeks in the North.

Cancer boy's swim tragedy

An eight-year-old boy who was battling against cancer died in a swimming pool hours after going on a special holiday to prepare him for more treatment, it was revealed yesterday.

Andrew Morris, of Locks Heath, Southampton, was pulled unconscious from the pool at the Longleaf Center Parks resort in Wiltshire as he bathed with his mother. Medics to revive the child at the resort but, despite being airlifted to hospital, he was pronounced dead shortly afterwards.

Andrew, who had been suffering cancer for two years, had been taken to the resort on Monday for a week's holiday as a special treat before returning to hospital for further chemotherapy. Police believe his illness may have contributed to his death and are unable to confirm whether or not he was drowned.

Footballer's brother in gun death



The shocked partner of ex-England soccer star Barry Venison's younger brother told yesterday how he began "smashing up" their home two days before he was found dead from gunshot wounds.

Sharon Ridley said that when David Venison got into a temper last Friday night, she feared she and their three young children would be killed, and they fled the house and spent the weekend at a woman's refuge. Mr Venison, who is thought to have killed himself, was depressed after the death of his mother Veda, 52, whose funeral was held last week, she said.

Mr Venison's body was found when his father and an uncle forced their way into the house on Sunday.

Ms Ridley said she was speaking out to deny media suggestions about his death and that he resented the fame of his brother Barry (pictured), now a Southampton player.

Parents tied toddler into car seat

The parents of an 18-month-old baby boy tied him into a car safety seat for 10 nights to prevent him undoing his nappy and making a mess, Gloucester Crown Court was told yesterday.

The child's mother and stepfather, both 23 and from Wotton under Edge, Gloucestershire, admitted wilfully ill-treating him by keeping him "cocooned" in the safety seat at night. The mother was sentenced to six months' jail suspended for a year, and the stepfather was ordered to do 175 hours of community service. The judge said he was satisfied they had been "irresponsible and misguided in the extreme" rather than deliberately cruel.

Boy, 11, accused of male rape

An 11-year-old boy is due before a crown court judge next week accused of raping a 12-year-old boy.

Nottinghamshire police said the incident allegedly took place in the Basford area of Nottingham last October. The boy, who is now 11 and cannot be named for legal reasons, was 10 at the time of the alleged offences. He is accused of robbery and rape.

Man denies Tube robberies

The leader of a gang of train robbers was trapped by police when he answered a call on a stolen pager, the Old Bailey was told yesterday.

Leroy Fearon, who is accused of leading an armed gang which terrorised passengers on the London Underground, decided to use his home phone to respond to a message left on the bleeper by a detective. The officer then dialled 1471 to get the number, and traced it to an address in Kilburn, north-west London, where Mr Fearon, was arrested. The prosecution alleges that Mr Fearon, 35, and his accomplices used the threat of a shotgun, pistol, and knives to demand money and valuables during a crime spree on the Metropolitan Line last spring. Mr Fearon denies the charge and the case continues. Kim Sengupta

French fleet in fishing protest

French fishermen carried out a "friendly" invasion of Guernsey yesterday, marching through the streets of the island's capital to present a petition over disputed fishing rights. They had hoped to talk directly to their Channel Island counterparts but when their fleet of 13 boats arrived, the fishermen of St Peter Port were noticeable by their absence, deciding it would be better to leave negotiations to politicians and civil servants. The Guernsey bailiff, Sir Graham Dorey, also decided to keep a low profile leaving his secretary, Anthony Richings, to receive a petition requesting the reinstatement of an agreement allowing them to fish in Guernsey waters. Philip Jeanne

people



Teresa Minter and Denise Cullen outside Guy's Hospital yesterday (Photograph: Phil Meech)

Million to one transplant joy for long-lost school friends

Two women, both 28, who had been best friends at primary school but had not seen each other for 17 years, were reunited when they both received kidney transplants from the same donor.

The connection only emerged on the day that Teresa Minter and Denise Cullen underwent surgery at Guy's Hospital, in south London. The two women are still living within miles of their primary school, St Francis of Assisi in Peckham, south London. They also have the same blood group and tissue type, and when transplant organs became available they were the most suitable matches in the area.

Geoffrey Koffman, transplant surgeon at Guy's, said: "The chances of this happening are extraordinary. There are more than 7 million people in the health region, but Guy's carries out only around 100 kidney transplants a year."

The friends were placed in different classes at St Veronica's Secondary High and drifted apart as Teresa developed kidney problems and took time off school

for dialysis and treatment. For nearly two decades they were out of touch. Mrs Minter did not know her friend had suffered kidney failure last summer. But in January both received urgent calls telling them they had been chosen for transplants.

Ms Cullen had already gone down to the operating theatre when Mrs Minter saw a woman who looked familiar. When they began talking, she realised it was the mother of her school friend.

"It's better than winning the lottery," Mrs Minter said yesterday. "The transplant has not only given us an opportunity to live normal lives, but it has brought us back together again. It's really great stuff. The doctors couldn't believe it."

The friendship reignited. Mrs Minter, who lives in Norwood, and Ms Cullen, who is still in Peckham, are now on the telephone to each other all the time. Although Mrs Minter had some initial problems with rejection of her transplanted kidney, both women are now recovering well.

Brenda leads ITV's bid for summer ratings

ITV has created Gayle Tuesday, its own Page Three "stunner", as the centrepiece of a comedy battle with its new rival Channel 5.

Gayle's World, starring the stand-up comedian Brenda Bruce, will run nightly in a new ITV Comedy Zone created as part of the commercial channel's £170m summer schedule.

Channel 5 already has a nightly programme called the Comedy Store. ITV's Comedy Zone comes from the comedy club Jongleurs in London. Channel 5's comes from The Comedy Store, also in London. The Comedy Zone will run on weeknights after News at Ten.

The ITV network director, Marcus Plarrin, hinted that he was looking for ways to move News at Ten now that Channel 5 is scheduled to launch its new evening movies against the news every night.

Borrowing from other broadcasters is a theme of the schedule. ITV is running a week of themed "paranormal" programmes called Into The Unknown. The themed strand was pioneered by Channel 4 and copied by BBC2. ITV is using Into The Unknown to introduce Millennium, an American sci-fi series from the producer of BBC1's X-Files.

"The objective is to give a range



of programmes that have specific appeal to younger viewers. It is nothing to do with Channel 5," said Mr Plarrin.

ITV is likely to raise eyebrows with its first broadcast of The Royal Tournament which it won from the BBC. It plans to use the makers of the Gladiators to produce the show and include some of the Gladiators in the programme.

ITV has reduced by a third the number of repeats in its summer schedule from 90 to 60 hours. It is also banking heavily on big audiences from its Formula 1 coverage and the climax of the UEFA Champions' League.

Last voyage for Falklands rebel

Tributes were paid yesterday to the Falklands veteran Captain Nick Barker, who has died, aged 63.

The captain and his ship Endurance played a vital part in the 1982 South Atlantic conflict. But he incurred the wrath of the establishment by saying his warnings of an escalation of tension in the area before the invasion had been ignored.

In January 1982 when the ship visited the Argentinian port of Ushuaia he was told by an Argentine naval officer that he was in "the Malvinas war zone".

When he asked who the enemy was, he was told: "You".

He was also warned by an Argentine captain over a glass of brandy that an invasion was imminent. Both incidents, he said, were reported but ignored by officials.

He also said he was brushed off by Navy HQ when he phoned during the conflict to clarify the rules of engagement. He was told to ring again after 2pm when the relevant official would be back from lunch.

The son of a Navy man, Barker retired from the service in 1988. He went on to write novels, including Red Ice, a thriller set in the South Atlantic, and Beyond Endurance, an account of the conflict.

Captain Barker, who died after a long illness, leaves a wife Jennifer and four children. Obituary, page 16

briefing

INDUSTRY

Stalling car sales blamed on election uncertainty

A dramatic drop in the number of people planning to buy cars over the next 12 months is being blamed on the election, according to the latest quarterly Autoglass Car Confidence Index.

Figures from the survey show that the number of people intending to buy cars during the coming year has dropped by one fifth, from 36 per cent to 30 per cent.

Car buyers' confidence had been at a three-year high from August 1996 until January 1997, but these latest figures show motorists are stalling on their decision to buy new vehicles.

The latest Autoglass survey quizzed prospective car buyers on why they were hesitant to buy and discovered that 60 per cent of drivers concerned about the election fear they will be worse off under any new government.

Andy Edyevean, Autoglass manager, said: "Cars are major purchases and the political climate is clearly affecting buyers' attitudes."

"We are hoping this fall is just a blip and things will go back to normal after the election. The trend is for booming car sales and we are convinced that record-breaking highs will soon return."

The latest statistics from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders also show a drop in the number of cars being registered for March, down by 0.2 per cent.

The total number of cars registered for the first quarter of 1997 was up by 3.48 per cent at 549,534 cars, 18,485 more than the same period last year.

Colin Blackstock



PHARMACEUTICALS

Drug exports reach £6bn

British pharmaceutical companies exported medicines worth £6bn last year, according to a review of the industry tomorrow.

The report by the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) shows that exports had increased by 11 per cent in the year to November 1996. It says the UK pharmaceutical industry is heading for a record trade surplus for 1996 of £2.5bn.

Trevor Jones, director-general of the ABPI, said he was confident the industry, which employs 75,000 people in the UK, would soon become "the biggest single money earner for Britain". The biggest current export earner is road vehicles at £14bn.

The review revealed that Britons spend an average of £70 per head a year on prescription medicines - they are likely to spend twice as much on tobacco products and three times as much on alcoholic drinks. They required more than 10 prescriptions each in 1996 - one more than in 1995.

Mark Rowe

TOURISM

Parking most vital for B&B guests

Parking comes before cooking for guests staying at bed-and-breakfast establishments, it was revealed yesterday.

B&B guests rate on-site parking as the most important thing about their stay - even above a cooked breakfast or an evening meal, the AA said.

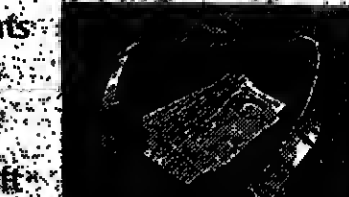
After parking, the top priority was a cooked breakfast. The next most important aspect of a B&B stay was tea and coffee-making facilities in the room.

An evening meal was fourth in the priority list, while the availability of an ironing board and telephone in the guests' bedroom was rated as the least important.

The survey was carried out during tests for the AA's Landlord of the Year competition. Twenty finalists have been chosen from more than 3,500 AA-listed small hotels, guesthouses, farmhouses and inns.

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Sacked BA union man to appeal

The highest-paid union official in Britain, sacked from his job with British Airways after allegedly attacking another official, is considering launching an appeal against the airline's decision.

Mike Coleman, who was earning more than £100,000 from his BA job and as head of British Airlines Stewards and Stewardesses Association (Bassa), is said to have assaulted and spat at Dave Fallon, an official of Cabin Crew 89, a small union which represents mainly long-haul staff.

The allegations were substantiated by an internal BA hearing. A final appeal, to a director of the airline, then upheld the decision to sack him last week. However the union claims to have six witnesses whose accounts differ from that considered by the airline. According to a Bassa spokesman, Mr Coleman "is considering an appeal for unfair dismissal".

A BA spokesman said Mr Coleman could take the matter up at an industrial tribunal, but stood by his decision.

The spokesman said: "We can confirm that Mike Coleman has been dismissed. Physical assault is construed as gross misconduct for which dismissal is the appropriate sanction."

Bassa is affiliated to the giant Transport and General Workers' Union, which has nearly one million members. Yet the TGWU boss Bill Morris receives an

annual salary of only £47,000. Mr Coleman picks up nearly £50,000 a year just in commission on his members' £120 annual union subscription.

Mr Coleman also gets a 7 per cent cut from union subscriptions and £75 a day he receives from branch funds for union business. This is believed to top £20,000 a year in addition to his salary.

Bassa has around 8,500 members, compared with the 3,500 members of Cabin Crew 89, which broke away from the association eight years ago.

Mr Coleman lives in a £300,000 home in Hampton, south-west London, complete with swimming pool and snooker table. His children are privately educated.

The government's Trade Union Certification Office confirmed today it had conducted a year-long investigation into allegations of financial irregularity at Bassa, which involved interviewing Mr Coleman.

The Certification Officer, Ted Whybrow, decided to take no further action, writing in a letter to TGWU general secretary Bill Morris last month: "From what I have seen, there is no evidence of a significant issue of financial corruption in which members' funds were diverted to private gain."

"But there is evidence of extremely bad administration, weak financial controls and non-implementation of the union's own rules regarding the control of branch finances."

Randee Ramseh

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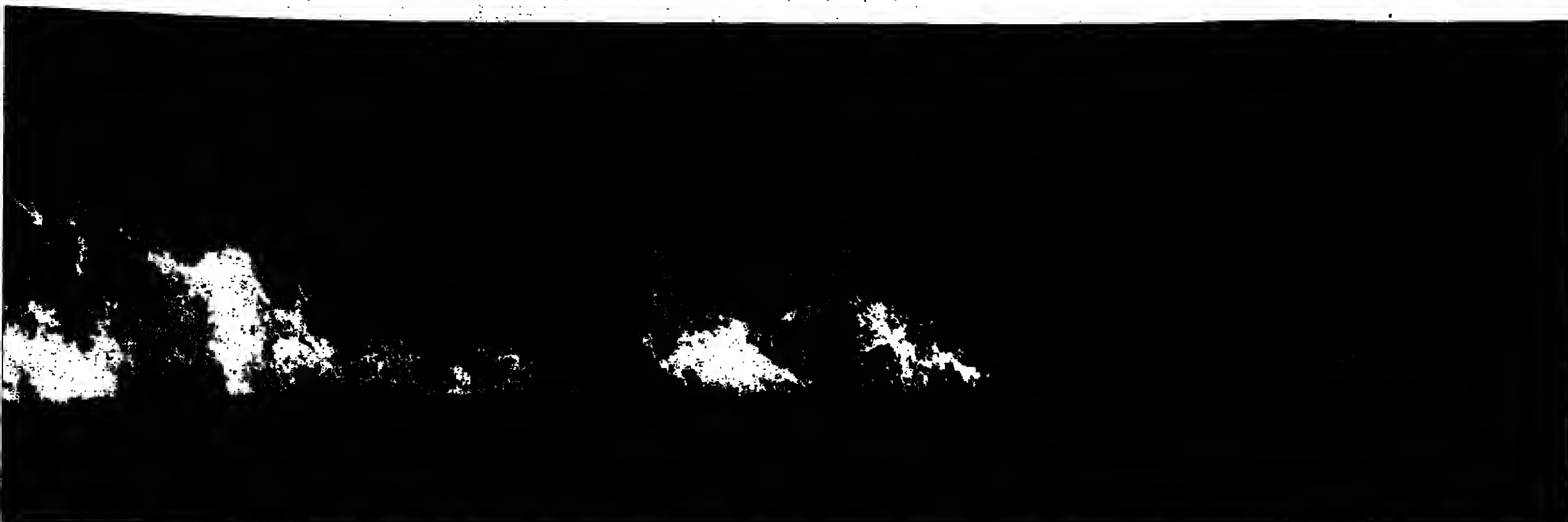
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Up in smoke: Firefighters battling with the blaze that destroyed two square miles of Dartmoor on Monday, damaging wildlife. If the climate continues to be warm and dry, fires like this could occur regularly Photograph: Guy Newman/Apex

Fires ignite tinder-dry Britain

National park and woodlands damaged

Nicholas Schoon

The deepening drought has left large swathes of upland England and its national parks endangered by fires.

If the climate continues to be warm and dry, there are bound to be more countryside fires – and large wildfires of the kind seen in North America and southern Europe could start to be seen in Britain.

The week began with a moorland fire on Dartmoor, Devon, the worst there in more than two decades, which burned out two square miles and caused severe damage to wildlife in a nature reserve. Then, yesterday, a large fire in a forest in Cheshire showed woodlands could be in danger too.

Hot, dry summers invariably increase the risk of moorland and forest fires, leading to extreme anti-fire precautions in the most vulnerable areas. Parts of

the Peak District National Park were closed for more than a month in the drought year of 1995 because of the fire risk.

But this year the severe short-fall in winter rain has meant the risk is mounting much earlier than usual on much of England's moorlands. The new green growth of heather and bracken – which is fire-resistant – has not yet started, while in many areas the dead vegetation is extremely dry.

A 61-year-old man arrested on suspicion of starting the Dartmoor fire was released on police bail yesterday. The local man will report back to Torquay police station in mid-May, said a Devon and Cornwall force spokesman.

Two hundred firemen fought the flames on the eastern edge of the moor on Monday afternoon and into the night. Up to 10 appliances were still at the scene yesterday, dealing with the

occasional minor flare-up as the hot, sunny weather continued.

There was another large fire on north Dartmoor last week. Some of that blaze was in the park's military firing range area, and two shells exploded making it dangerous for the Fire Brigade to work there. Dr Nick Atkinson, Dartmoor National Park chief officer, said it could take 20 years for the heathland to recover.

The fire, near the village of Lustleigh, raced through heathland which is due to be designated a National Nature Reserve later this year – but it did not penetrate the upland oaks of Yarnor Wood which already have that designation.

Phil Page, South Devon sites manager for English Nature, said the blaze had wiped out Dartmoor's only colony of one of Britain's rarest small birds, the Dartford Warbler just at the start of its nesting season.

The warbler, of which there are only some 600 breeding pairs in the country, only arrived on Dartmoor a few years ago.

Moorland is deliberately burnt in a controlled way between October and the end of April across the country to encourage new growth and game birds, especially grouse. But some of these burns have got out of control in recent weeks.

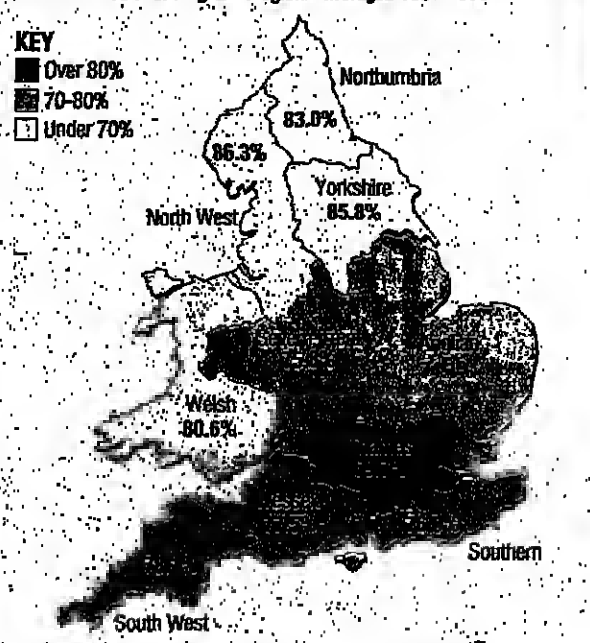
The North Yorkshire Moors national park said the risk of fires was now growing. "We've had to put out some early warnings," said David Brewster head of park services.

There was a major blaze in a clearing in Delamere Forest, central Cheshire, in the afternoon when a controlled burn got out of hand.

Up to 60 firefighters from the Cheshire Brigade fought the flames and succeeded in stopping them spreading into the surrounding woods.

Where the drought hits hardest

Rainfall values for the period April 1996 to March 1997 as % of long-term regional averages 1961-1990



Sunbathing warnings start before summer

Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

Cancer charities yesterday warned early sunbathers that soaking up the rays even at this time of the year could put them in danger of skin damage.

Despite the well-known link between sunburn and skin cancer there are 40,000 new cases of skin cancer reported in Britain every year and the most serious form of the disease, malignant melanoma, kills 1,500 people annually.

But while many people take precautions abroad, they still discount the risk in Britain. And experts are worried that young people still desire a tan. A MORI poll for the Cancer Research Campaign found that nearly 60 per cent of 8 to 10-year-olds thought a sun tan

made them look cool.

The hours around midday are the most dangerous for sunbathing with 11am-3pm being the peak period for burning. Sunbathers along the coast are most at risk due to deceptive cold winds blowing in from the sea and the clarity of the coastal atmosphere.

Health Education Authority guidance says people should shift to the shade around midday, take care not to burn, cover up and use a high-factor sunscreen on exposed skin.

Hayfever is set to hit sufferers at least three weeks earlier than usual this year. The Pollen Research Unit said unusually high March temperatures had hastened the production of birch tree pollen, particularly in southern England and the Midlands.



A Yeoman of the Guard with the basket which may have been used to catch fish for Henry VIII

Henry VIII fishing basket turns up in the moat at the Tower of London

Simon Reeve

A wicker basket which could have been used to catch fish for Henry VIII has been discovered by archaeologists in the Tower of London moat.

It is rare to find an old artefact made from an organic material such as wicker still intact, and the nine-strong team which discovered the basket on Monday evening delayed removing it until yesterday to prevent it from being exposed overnight.

The basket dates from the late 15th or early to mid-16th century, which is the period

when fish from the moat were being cooked for the king's table, and was found west of the White Tower, in what used to be known as the West Moat. During the 16th century fish caught in that area were reserved for the king's household.

"To unearth something like this in a moat anywhere would be very interesting, but to find it in a world heritage site is extremely important," said Graham Keevil, director of the excavation. "The discovery backs up all the documentary sources we have on this period."

According to Mr Keevil, arte-

facts made from organic materials such as wicker rarely survive due to bacterial decay from the soil, but conservation experts believe the basket was preserved because of water levels in the clay and by being four metres beneath the surface of the soil.

After they noticed pieces of wickerwork protruding from the trench on Monday, the archaeologists began the preparations to move the basket. "To protect it, they will remove the basket in the large block of soil it was found in by slipping a timber board underneath."

They will then probably use

an airtight container – described by one expert as a "giant lunchbox" – to ensure the basket stays waterlogged and to prevent oxygen from causing decay. The container and basket will then be moved to Hampton Court in south-west London, where more protracted conservation treatment can begin.

The West Moat, the site of the find, is proving to be a treasure trove for archaeologists. "This is one of the best places at the Tower of London to dig because it gives you a cross section of the entire area," said Mr Keevil, who believes it is a

prime archaeological site. His team has been on site for just under a year and has dug about 60 trenches around the Tower of London, but the site of the West Moat is the biggest single trench dug so far.

The fishing basket counts among the top five finds unearthed on the site. Last year, members of the Oxford Archaeological Unit unearthed a tower dating from the 13th century during the reign of Henry III, and only last week a jug and a money box, estimated to be at least 500 years-old, were discovered in the same area.

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e. coli findings

Hygiene purge on food shops ordered

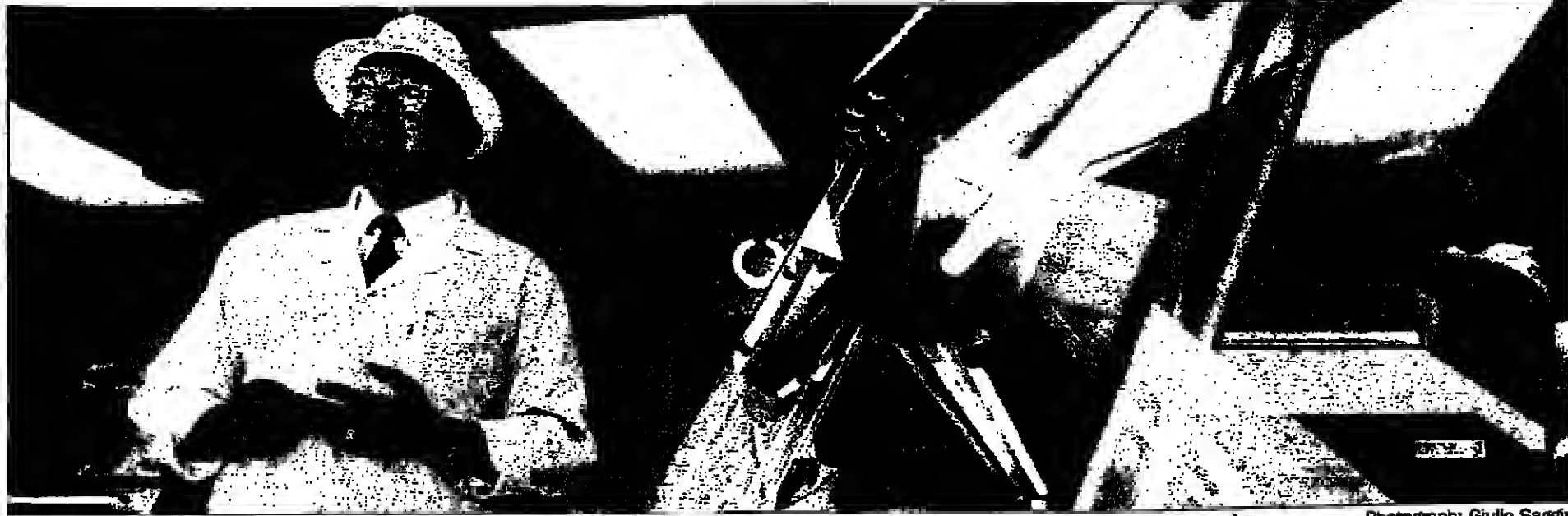
Stephen Goodwin
and Charles Arthur

Tragedies like the *E. coli* outbreaks in Scotland, which killed more than 20 people, could be averted if the Government abandoned its "light touch" approach to enforcement of hygiene regulations.

A report on the outbreaks by Professor Hugh Pennington's expert group stopped short of blaming deregulation for leading to the deaths. But its conclusions made it clear that legislation, rather than "best-practice" recommendations, must be implemented to avert similar outbreaks.

The final report offered some comfort to small and rural butchers, who had feared it would demand that separate staff should deal with raw and cooked meat, to avert contamination. This was suggested in the interim report in December. That could have forced many to close.

Instead, the report says extra staff should be taken on "where possible." At its publication in Edinburgh yesterday Michael

Fresh start: John Barr in his shop yesterday in Wishaw, which was identified as the source of the outbreak of the *E. coli* outbreak in November

Photograph: Giulio Saggin

Forsyth, the Scottish Secretary, brushed aside concern about the effect of deregulation on hygiene and focused on the Government's response, which was

to accept the report's recommendations. Mr Forsyth and Prof Pennington, who examined the circumstances leading to the outbreak of *E. coli* O157 in Lan-

arkshire in November, in which 18 people died, suggested butchers were struggling to learn a new method of hazard analysis at heart of EU food

laws. The Tories' opponents seized on one particular paragraph of the report in which the professor, a microbiologist at Aberdeen University, said sig-

nificant changes to government policy on food safety, including deregulation, had created uncertainty among environmental health officers (EHOs).

"The apparent desire on the part of the Government for a light touch to enforcement has left EHOs uncertain about the policy imperatives and their expected roles," the report said.

The full report was only delivered yesterday afternoon to the Scottish Office. In an immediate response, the Government accepted all the recommendations, including one for a licensing system for butchers not covered by the Meat Products (Hygiene) Regulations of 1994.

The change will apply to 1,200 butchers in Scotland at present covered by "less prescriptive" regulations. A key requirement will be separation in storage, sale and display between raw meat and unwrapped cooked meat products.

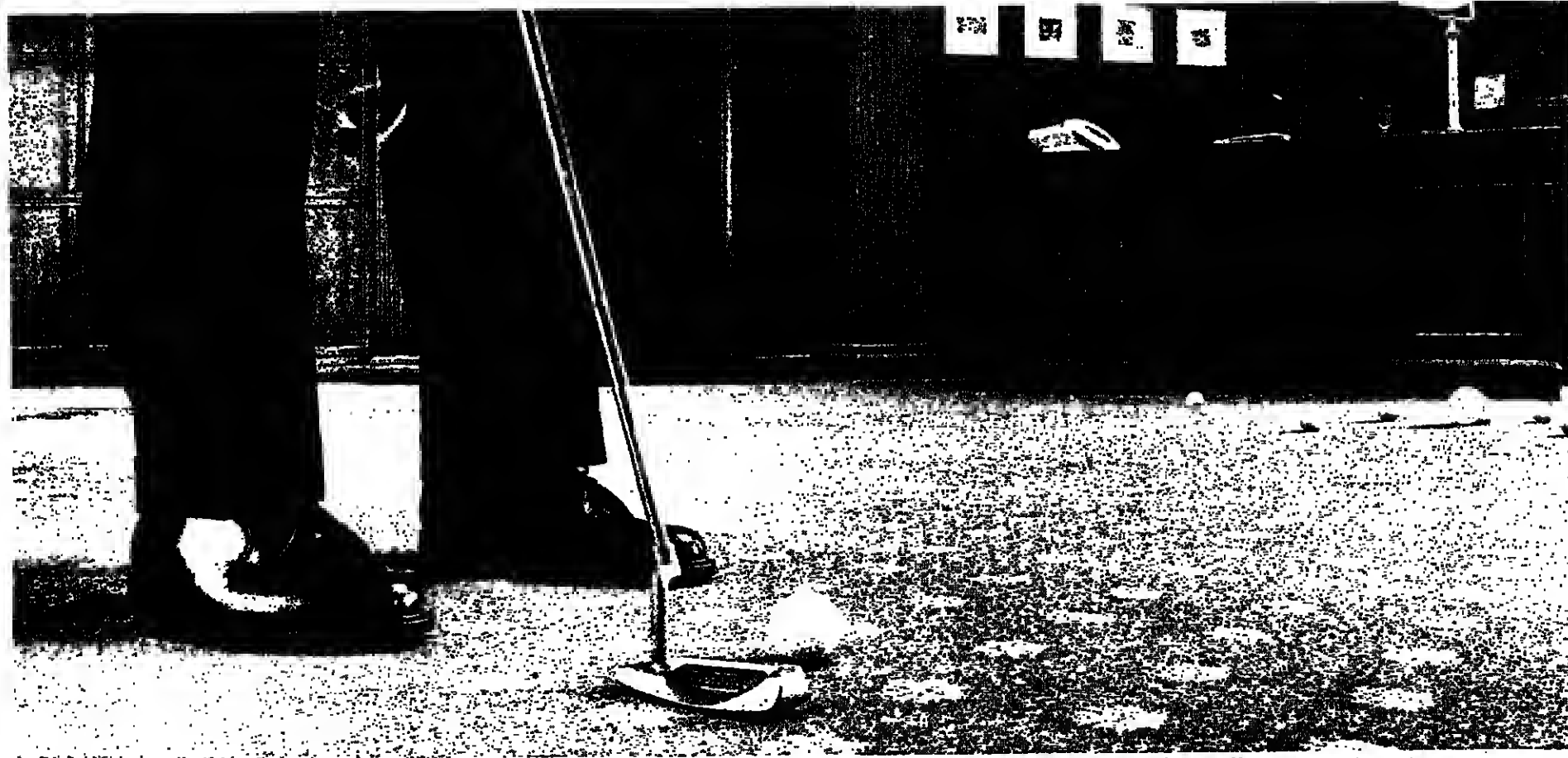
Raw meat and cooked meat should also be handled "wherever possible" by separate staff.

The Pennington team would have preferred wholly separate staffing, but bowed to concerns of small local butchers. Mr Forsyth put the cost to butchers at £5,000-£20,000 per shop, though where the best practice, embodied in the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point system, is already in place, the cost should be negligible. "Many butchers don't even know what HACCP is," said Prof Pennington. The more stringent 1994 regulations apply to butchers selling cooked meat to other retailers. John M Barr and Son of Wishaw, the butcher at the source of the outbreak, had claimed exemption from 1994 regulations, even though the business was involved in a substantial wholesale trade.

The Pennington recommendations try to tighten hygiene standards "from the farm to the fork" calling for education of farm workers on the need for cattle to free of faeces when going to slaughter.

"There clearly has to be a cultural change amongst slaughterhouse operators and their staff," said the report. Introducing all the regulations to slaughterhouses could take up to 18 months, said Peter Scott, of the Federation of Fresh Meat Wholesalers. But he warned that retailers, such as butchers, would be hardest hit by the suggested changes. "Slaughterhouses had to go through a revamp between 1988 and 1993 to meet EC regulations. The retailers are going to have to face that, and it's going to be hard when they face pressure from supermarkets." New legislation will be "unavoidable," said John Fuller, director of the National Federation of Meat and Food Traders, which represents 11,000 shops in England and Wales.

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Families left no wiser on the cause of poisoning

A note pinned to the Wishaw church where a group of pensioners ate their fatal steak pie lunch last November invites people of all denominations to join "a service of thanksgiving and memorial" later this month.

There was little sign yesterday of reconciliation for some. Paul Santoni, lawyer for many of the bereaved families, attacked the Pennington Inquiry report as a damp squib, claiming it avoided any analysis of what had caused the outbreak on the grounds that such information could prejudice the fatal accident inquiry and any criminal charges.

Mr Santoni said the inquiry team had only done half the job it was given, and what it did say merely repeated previous reports and recommendations. "Professor Pennington is saying that he is making recommendations on the basis of information that he's not telling us about," Mr Santoni said.

"People want to know what happened to them or to those who died, and those questions are unanswered. The families will be extremely disappointed because the report doesn't deal with the circumstances."

"What is required is a full, open and honest disclosure by all those involved as to the full and complete circumstances giving rise to the outbreak and until that is available those affected by this disaster cannot be expected to have their minds put at rest."

For John Barr, the butcher at the centre of Britain's worst food poisoning outbreak, it is too early to give thanks in church. He is awaiting trial on a charge of recklessly supplying contaminated food to an 18th birthday party. His shop re-opened on 27 February, having been changed to take on board the interim findings of the Pennington Inquiry, with cooked and uncooked meat at different counters and with separate staffing and colour-

Douglas Fraser finds little sign of reconciliation in Wishaw with many relatives still seeking answers

coded utensils. The business has given up much of the wholesale supply which saw the outbreak spread widely throughout central Scotland.

Mr Barr's Glasgow solicitor, George Moore, said his client welcomed the recommendations as a significant contribution to food safety.

Wishaw's other main butcher, James Chapman, had awaited the report before implementing major change. Shop manager James MacQuade said it is hard to tell if custom was badly affected by the winter food scare. "The meat industry has been taking one knock after another for the past few years," he said. "Before BSE, there was the scare about eating red meat. But people tend to forget what has happened. We're lucky to be still here."

However, some Wishaw residents have changed their habits. Anne Slavin, a housewife, prefers to buy her meat from a local supermarket where it is pre-packed. She has stopped eating red meat and sticks with pre-cooked chicken. "Everybody was frightened of going into the butchers," she said. "Everyone I spoke to stopped eating meat, but people are now going back to what they always did."

Alan Horn, a 23-year-old unemployed man, said he had stopped eating pre-cooked meat after the outbreak as did his family, but they had all gone back to eating some in the past two weeks. "I'm more careful about what I eat now," he said. "I eat more vegetables, and I don't eat pies anymore."

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Rogue advertisers eye city marathon

Ian Burrell

The danger of terrorist attack is not the only threat to this weekend's London Marathon. Organisers said last night that a tight security operation is being planned to stop the event being hijacked by unauthorised advertisers.

Nick Bitel, the marathon's chief executive, said last night that Britain's efforts to stage top international sporting events were being undermined by the lack of legislation against "ambush marketing".

Several international sports companies, including the American sportswear company Nike, are believed to be planning unofficial campaigns to capitalise on this year's marathon, which

attracts a UK television audience of six million.

Nike yesterday unveiled a new poster in a London-wide campaign aimed to coincide with the marathon. The company said it was "not trying to hijack" the event.

"We are not an official sponsor but around the London Marathon people are very interested in running," said spokesman Graham Anderson. "It is a high-profile event and all companies with an interest in running will be down there."

Ambush marketing is not illegal. Last year Nike bought up every bus-stop poster site around the course for unofficial adverts featuring a disabled competitor.

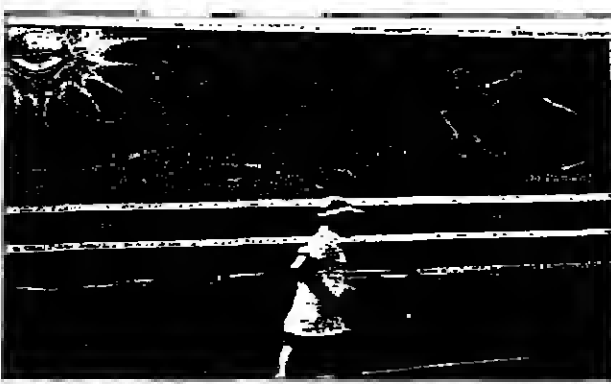
It was the latest in a success-

ion of "ambushes" by Nike, a great rival of Asics, the official sponsor of the event.

In a previous year Nike hired a huge advertising billboard at a key site near the historic Cutty Sark in Greenwich, which race organisers then had to obscure from television cameras.

On another occasion, the sports company sought planning permission for a giant inflatable running shoe to be attached to a building overlooking a prime site. Race organisers managed to block the application.

This year, a team of race officials will spend the night before the race patrolling the perimeter and clearing unofficial advertising. The final sweep will be carried out just 20 minutes ahead of the runners. Mr



Running start: Nike's new advert Photograph: Nick Tapsell

Bitel said: "The marathon is a difficult event to protect because we are not in a clean stadium. It is much easier to ambush an open air event."

In the next three years, more than 20 world and European sporting championships are due to be staged and the Sports Council recently announced a

£3m lottery-funded kitty to help sports governing bodies bring events to Britain.

Mr Bitel, a London lawyer, said: "Sponsorship is absolutely pivotal to your ability to stage events. If you cannot keep your advertisers happy because of the ambushing antics of another company then it will cost you on the bottom line."

He said many major sporting events, such as the Euro 96 soccer championships, were run on tight budgets and made little direct profit.

Mr Bitel said ambush marketing was a particular problem in Britain because laws on the subject are weaker than any comparable country.

Victims of ambush marketing

in Britain have little legal recourse other than through legislation designed to prevent the "passing off" of one product as another.

The Football Association recently failed to prevent Trebor Bassett, the sweet company, from using England shirts in their promotions during Euro 96. The FA has an arrangement with Snickers, made by Mars.

Mr Bitel would like to see American-style legislation introduced to give event organisers greater protection against ambushing. "They are much stricter in their protection of intellectual property," he said.

Nike's saturation advertising during Euro 96 convinced 23 per cent of the population that they were the official sponsor, when in fact it was Umbro.

Some people have been led to think that Britvic are associated with Manchester United after a poster campaign for the Red Card sports drink featuring an Eric Cantona lookalike in a red football shirt with the collar turned up.

American Express has also run several campaigns around the Olympics, which is sponsored by its rival Visa.

Mr Bitel predicted there could be difficulties in attracting sponsors for the next Rugby World Cup in Britain after Guinness saturated the last Seisnager-sponsored event.

Some companies feel they get better rewards from sponsoring individuals rather than sporting events.

Exit in confusion as critics savage plays directed by the critics

David Lister

The theatre advertised this by saying that "four established critics have chosen to expose their theatrical credentials to public view". The critics may now be wishing they had kept them private.

The experiment by the Battersea Arts Centre, a leading London fringe venue now run by ex-critic Tom Morris, to allow four theatre critics to direct plays has drawn huge media attention, attracted celebrity reviewers and a BBC television documentary.

Lawrence Elman, co-producer of the £40,000 season, said: "I believe critics see more

theatre than anyone else, which leads me to feel that these four shows will be of the highest quality seen for a long time."

That is hazy logic of a high order. By the same thinking we can look forward to a season of the same critics playing in *Hamlet* or *Run For Your Wife*, of opera critics singing *Tosca*, of music critics conducting the London Symphony Orchestra, of education correspondents teaching the sixth form, and political editors taking it in turns to run the country.

By opening night, the BBC was getting anxious. A producer telephoned *The Independent* in high dudgeon, cajoling us, without success, to use one of



their list of celebrity reviewers. If the television documentary was having problems, clearly so was the theatre. Ticket sales have not exactly been brisk. Odd as it may seem, the theatre going public seems unclear why it should pay money to see plays directed by people who have

never directed before. But salute Michael Billington of the *Guardian*, Nicholas De Jongh of the *Evening Standard*, Jeremy Kingston of the *Times* and James Christopher, freelance, directing pieces by Pinter, Strindberg, Anouilh, Michael Tremblay and Robert Young.

The virgin directors have not only subjected themselves to the terror of the rehearsal room - "one of the most ghastly experiences of my life", according to De Jongh. They also face the more graphic terror of empty seats. And worst of all, they have discovered there is no honour among critics.

Michael Coveney, theatre critic of the *Observer*, turned

down an invitation to be one of the critic/directors or "one of the suckers" as he terms it. He said: "I said no because I'm a full time critic... And will I review these shows? I don't review amateur theatre."

Jane Edwards, theatre edi-

tor of the London listings magazine *Time Out*, is even more scathing: "I believe that if critics were really interested in learning how to direct, they would be quietly taking themselves off to do a course. Instead, they are taking up space

at BAC, denying the opportunity to people who have determined to make a career as a director..."

Director Malachi Bogdanov, whose adaptation of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* opens at the Cochrane Theatre in

London this week, added: "It's utterly frustrating. We have to book a theatre six months in advance, then they pull a stunt like this and it takes other critics away from coming to see our show. And it's got nothing to do with these people's actual jobs."

Director's cut: Nicholas de Jongh (left), theatre critic of London Evening Standard, finalising arrangements before his stage debut last night

Photograph: Adrian Dennis

Head of Plymouth quango plundered funds for jaunts

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

The chief executive of a government flagship project, the Plymouth Development Corporation, spent £9,210 of the organisation's money on his own private expenses during four overseas visits, according to a report by the all-party Public Accounts Committee.

John Collinson, who also wrongly authorised the expenditure of £2,080 by other members of staff, was suspended when the incidents in 1995 came to light and resigned.

The incidents concerning Mr Collinson were part of wider criticism of the way the Corporation was run by the MPs.

They say there was "poor stewardship of public funds" and that the Corporation "lost control over the expenditure of public funds".

There was a lack of basic checks on invoices, a high level of duplicate payments and inadequate management information to the board. For example, there were no records on why out of £10,832 worth of foreign currency provided for trips by the Corporation, £2,265 was not accounted for.

The Corporation sponsored a two-handed transatlantic yacht race in June 1994, costing £75,000, and a party of five employees and three representatives of their marketing consultants, Tamesis, travelled to

the US to award the prizes. Mr Collinson and several other staff members were accompanied by their families.

A property exhibition in Nice was attended by 14 people at the expense of the corporation, including the wife and child of the Corporation's commercial director, Jonathan Naughton, who has also subsequently left the Corporation.

The contract with Tamesis, and its partner, MSP, was also heavily criticised as it cost over £1.2m but was not the subject of a detailed contract. No details were provided on invoices, an 18-per-cent handling charge was placed on the contract without the knowledge of the Corporation's finance department and overcharges resulted in a rebate of £122,584 after the contract was terminated in December 1995.

The chief executives of other corporations and similar bodies have now been sent letters by the Department of the Environment, pointing out the lessons learned from the experience of Plymouth.

The Plymouth Development Corporation was established in 1993 with the aim of regenerating three waterfront areas of the city.

■ Committee of Public Accounts, Plymouth Development Corporation: regularity, propriety and control of expenditure. House of Commons paper 450, Stationery Office, £5.10.

DAILY POEM

The Apparition: a retrospect

By Herman Melville

Comedians came; and, where the field
Lays sleep in pastoral green,
A goblin-mountain was upheaved
(Sure the sacred sense was all deceived),
Mist-glen and slag-ravine.

The unreserve of Ill was there,
The clinkers in her last retreat;
But, ere the eye could take it in,
Or mind could comprehension win,
It sunk! - and at our feet.

So, then, Solitude's a crust -
The cone of fire below;
All may go well for many a year
But who can think without a fear
Of horrors that happen so?

Herman Melville wrote poetry for a much longer period than fiction, which he abandoned after the failure of *The Confidence-Man* in 1857. This reflection on the American Civil War dates from 1860 and appears in the new Penguin Classics anthology of *Nineteenth-Century American Poetry*, edited by William C. Spengemann with Jessica F. Roberts (Penguin, £9.99).

Britpop's future blurred by angst

Britpop has gone the way of existentialism, The Beatles and Bob Dylan. It has ceased to be harmless relaxation and become an academic discipline, writes David Lister.

Today Blur and Oasis take the ageing step from pop to pop culture when academics and musicologists gather at Leeds University for a one day symposium entitled Britpop: Towards a Musicological Perspective.

The symposium, on the genre's intertextuality, gender, sexuality and class, will hear learned papers such as *Representations of Britishness in Britpop* and *Oasis - What's The Copy (Pop Goes Sloppy?)*.

Stan Hawkins, associate professor of music in Oslo, will deliver a paper on the

on pop angst with a lecture: *'Anti-Rebel, Lonesome Boy - Morrissey in Crisis'*.

For organiser Steve Sweeney-Turner, 31, research fellow in music at Leeds, the necessity for an academic conference became clear in a dark moment at February's Brit Awards. It was the triumph of The Spice Girls and the gleeful cry by Ginger Spice: "Now we know that pop is back."

Mr Sweeney-Turner said: "The arrival of the Spice Girls provokes questions about whether Britpop is dead. I believe it might have been ousted. Equally, Blur's sudden professed alignment with certain American trends forces a number of questions. Has Britpop rejected its own aesthetic basis, or is it in a further phase of evolution?"

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news

High priority: Six miscarriages of justice head the waiting list for review

JAMES HANRATTY



Hanratty was hanged 35 years ago but police have concluded he was wrongly convicted of shooting Michael Gregson and raping and shooting Gregson's girlfriend, Valerie Storie, leaving her paralysed. A 400-page submission for the case to be referred to the Court of Appeal was presented to the Home Office in 1994, but the Office washed its hands of the case.

DEREK BENTLEY



Bentley was hanged, aged 19, for the murder of a police officer during a robbery in Croydon, south London. The bullet was fired by Christopher Craig, 16, who was too young to be hanged. Bentley was alleged to have shouted: "Let him have it, Chris", but Craig, who was released in 1963, denied that. A 55-page dossier is said to show Bentley was "feeble minded".

STEPHEN CRAVEN



Craven, 28, has served seven years of a life sentence for murdering 19-year-old Penny Leung on Christmas Eve 1989. She slapped a man's face for making an offensive remark at a club; he struck her with a glass which shattered on impact with her neck. Fingerprint evidence showing the glass carried a print not belonging to Craven was not disclosed by police.

THE CARDIFF THREE



The Cardiff Three - Darren Hall, Michael O'Brien (pictured) and Ellis Sherwood - were jailed as teenagers for the murder of a newsagent, in 1988. Not to be confused with an earlier Cardiff Three who the appeal court cleared of murdering a prostitute in 1982, the three were arrested after Hall confessed under police interrogation, in an echo of the Bridgewater case.

THE M25 THREE



The M25 Three - Michael Davis (pictured), Raphael Rowe and Randolph Johnson - were convicted in 1990 for a murder and violent attacks. The three convicted men are black, but victims had described the assailants as two white and one black. However, upholding the convictions in a 1993 appeal, Lord Justice Watkins said the case remained "formidable".

'DANNY' McNAMEE



Gilbert "Danny" McNamee was sentenced in 1986 to 25 years for conspiracy to cause the 1982 Hyde Park grandstand explosion. The blast killed four House of Commons Cavalrymen and seven horses. After his conviction, the self-confessed IRA terrorist Desmond Ellis claimed he had made the bomb used in the park. McNamee has repeatedly protested his innocence.

Criminal review body deluged with cases

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

The Criminal Cases Review Commission, the new government watchdog on miscarriages of justice, faces an initial avalanche of cases amid a short-fall in fully-trained staff, an ongoing dispute with the Home Office over funding and crucial computer systems not yet in place.

The disclosures came as the commission began work on the 251 cases it has received in its first week of operation, and as Sir Frederick Crawford, its chairman, broke the lengthy silence since his appointment last year to hold his first press conference.

The occasion was not, however, marked by any conclusions Sir Frederick - a former university administrator and prominent Freemason with no experience of criminal justice - may have reached about the state of the system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the commission's remit.

With his administrator's hat firmly in place, he said: "My role is to set up the commission and

get it working effectively and efficiently and as far as finances are concerned, as economically as possible".

It was clear yesterday that reliance is going to be placed on the 14-strong Birmingham-based body's better-known members, such as Karamjit Singh, a former Police Complaints Authority member who will serve full-time, to help present its human face and build public confidence.

Under intense questioning about his membership of the Freemasons, Sir Frederick insisted that no question of conflict of interest would arise because he would not be undertaking casework.

It was also apparent that he envisages little alternative to using the police to investigate themselves when police misconduct or failure is alleged. "There may be alternative ways of producing the same result but it is very difficult to find the necessary expertise and access," he told the news conference in Birmingham.

But members emphasised yesterday that in contrast to the secretive former Home Office



Under pressure: Sir Frederick Crawford, chairman of the Review Commission

Photograph: News Team

Criminal Cases Unit, or C3, the commission - which has the power to refer suspected miscarriages back to the appeal courts - would be open about its work.

That new openness took the form yesterday of the release of

a memorandum to the Commons home affairs select committee about the establishment and operation of the new body. The contents revealed, however, that the much-awaited commission may become the target for complaints about delay.

Concerns about the impact of the influx of cases - likely to be between 500 and 750 in the first year - are such that the paper asks for "suspension of judgement... as the new body copes with recruitment and training at the same time as the initial wave

of cases threatens to submerge it."

There is a "pressing need" for a dozen more caseworkers and the information technology system, crucial for scanning documents and allowing several people to work on a case at any

one time, is not yet up and running.

The worst area of financial uncertainty, according to the memorandum, is the cost of extensive investigations by police forces, which "may limit their inclination and capacity to undertake investigations for the CCRC willingly and expeditiously."

One case before the commission that will be subject to delay is that of James Hanratty, widely believed to have been wrongly convicted of the A6 murder.

A recommendation to Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, has not been included in the file passed from the Home Office to the commission. Sir Frederick said: "We will not have to start again but we will have to look at it very carefully."

But despite the absence of any mission statement, Sir Frederick emphasised that the commission was looking "very, very carefully" at the impact of the 1986 Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act, which governs the destruction of evidence by the police but which

did not prevent private firms, such as forensic laboratories, destroying material.

A total of 210 of the 251 cases before the commission yesterday are existing files passed from the Home Office.

Paul Cavadino, chairman of the Penal Affairs Consortium, an alliance of organisations concerned with the justice system, said: "Tremendous hopes have been invested in this commission. It would be tragic if its effectiveness were undermined by the failure to provide resources either with sufficient speed or on a substantial enough scale. Inevitably there was always going to be a backlog of cases which landed on the commission's desk."

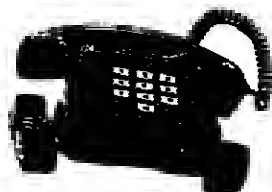
John Wadham, director of Liberty, the civil rights organisation, welcomed the commission's independence. He said, however, that the organisation was "concerned that the membership doesn't reflect sufficiently people who have had direct experience of miscarriages of justice cases."

Mr Wadham questioned the continuing use of police officers in re-investigations.

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THE INDEPENDENT

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تحتفظ من الأصل

The dark side of the Milky Way

Galaxy is shown to be spherical not flat

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

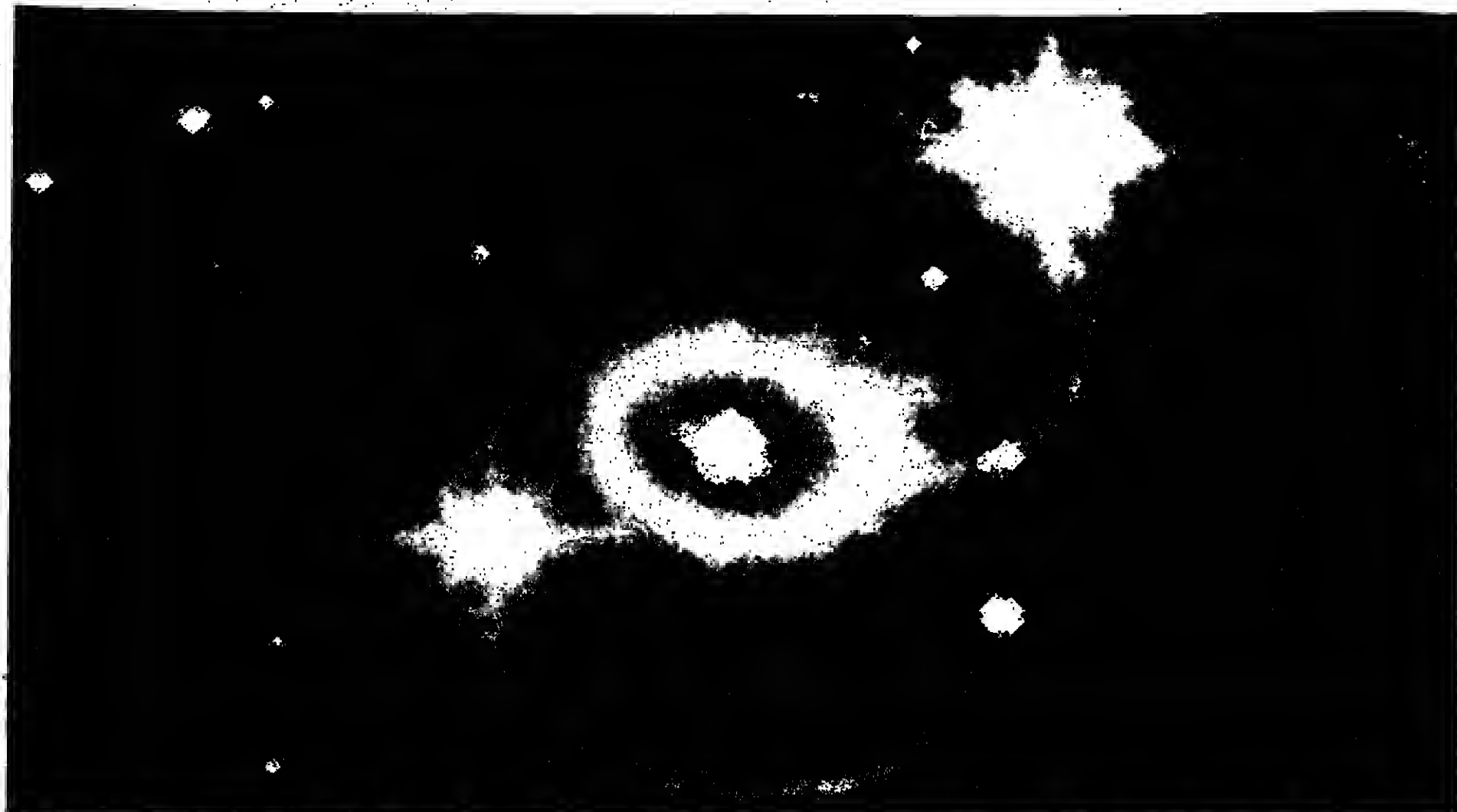
The Milky Way galaxy in which we live is not really flat, as people have thought, but roughly spherical, according to new research by British astronomers.

The conventional description is of a disk of stars with two spiral "arms" - with our sun far out in one of them - giving the galaxy a radius of about 10,000 light years. But the new calculations suggest there is a huge sphere of "dark matter" which we cannot see spreading out to a distance of 150,000 light years in a spherical "halo", say Robert Olling and Michael Merrifield of the University of Southampton.

The latest findings, to be announced today at the National Astronomical Meeting in Southampton, are illustrated bottom right: the blue points represent stars, the green points are a layer of hydrogen gas along the plane of the galaxy, and the red points are "dark matter".

The reason we haven't seen the true shape of our galaxy before is that dark matter is literally invisible: it does not radiate heat or light, and so cannot be detected by telescope. Current theories suggest it may be planet-sized chunks of matter which never reached the critical mass needed to start emitting light, or even minuscule black holes left over from the early stages of the Big Bang 15 billion years ago.

But astronomers have known for more than 20 years that dark matter exists - and constitutes more than 90 per cent of the mass of the universe - because of its gravitational effects on visible objects such as stars and even galaxies.



Debris from SN1987A, pictured by the Hubble Space Telescope. From Hubble's evidence, astronomers now think that 30,000 years ago two stars combined, creating the nova

"Previous estimates about the amount of dark matter always assumed that it was distributed in a sphere. We have shown that it is," said Dr Olling. "It is a very satisfying result. I have been struggling with these calculations for nine months."

The latest work calculated the presence and arrangement of dark matter around the Milky Way by observing its effects on a layer of hydrogen gas which is dispersed along the plane of the galaxy with the stars.

Dr Olling and Dr Merrifield estimated that the thickness of the hydrogen layer would depend on the arrangement of the dark matter. A lot of dark

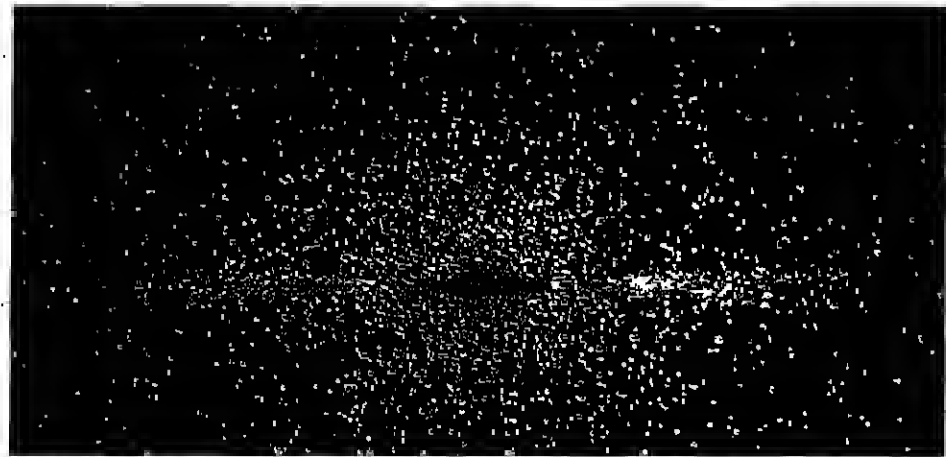
matter close to the galaxy's plane would pull the layer down, making it thin; but a more diffuse distribution would make the gas layer thicker.

The latest work suggests a huge, intergalactic spread of dark matter. However, Dr Olling said a lot of work remained to be done. "The Milky Way is particularly problematic to study, because we're standing in the midst of it, - that makes it difficult to see the overall perspective. It's not like a distant galaxy where you can see it all. One of the problems we have been struggling with is that we don't know how far away we are from the centre of the

galaxy, or how fast it's rotating. We know to 10 percent accuracy, but that error is enough to make a big difference."

Astronomers at Durham University reckon galaxies formed from matter in the early universe full of elementary particles known as "cold dark matter". These then create "embryo galaxies" which collide and merge to form the familiar spiral and elliptical galaxy formations. The theory is based on observations of proto-galaxies which formed when the universe was only about 1 billion years old - less than a tenth of its present age.

Leading article, page 17



Expanding horizons: The new view of the galaxy revealed by British astronomers

British Scientists to simulate explosion of a star

Scientists aim to simulate the explosion of a star - a supernova - in laboratories at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. A full-scale recreation would be more devastating than any nuclear explosion that the Earth has witnessed, writes Charles Arthur.

But the physics department team aim to set off chemical explosions which would propagate rather like the internal nuclear fires of an exploding sun.

Generally, during its intense period of nova activity, a star collapses and heats up enormously. New elements are formed in the core while much of the gas is blown off into space. The core often explodes, distributing new matter and elements into space. Thus, supernovae are an essential part of the "life cycle" of galaxies, and especially life.

Geraint Thomas, who is leading the research, said: "The gaps in our knowledge as to how supernovae actually explode leaves room for much uncertainty. The experimental findings will allow astrophysicists to confirm or modify their models." Like fires, the explosion of a supernova can propagate as a flame or a detonation. The experiments will also help safety experts predict more accurately the severity of industrial plant explosions.

Observations of some supernovae, such as SN1987A, suggest they might begin as a slow flame which becomes supersonic, setting off a detonation. SN1987A was a star in the Large Magellanic Cloud which in 1987 suddenly turned into a supernova. After studying pictures taken by the Hubble Space Telescope, astronomers now reckon that two stars orbiting each other combined, and the core collapsed, eventually producing the nova.

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THE INDEPENDENT election '97

The terror of being behind the lines



Bell: 'It's absolutely terrifying'

As Martin Bell tucked into a fried breakfast in his prospective constituency yesterday morning, the staff of the Longview hotel were agog. It was not Mr Bell's appearance, or the eminent political pundit's lining up in reception to interview him which excited them; it was that David Soul, star of the 1970s cop show *Starsky and Hutch*, had rung up to offer Mr Bell his support.

As if the sight of the Tory candidate for Tatton Neil Hamilton being lauded by *Coronation Street* actor Bill Roache was not surreal enough, Mr Bell yesterday launched his campaign with the support of Colonel Bob Stewart, who led the Cheshire regiment in Bosnia.

He also has the support of an ex-wife in the Pacific and Soul, the American actor and singer of such classics as "All I want is black bean soup (and you to give it to me)".

"He's an old friend of mine. He lived in London for a while and we have dinner quite often," Mr Bell explained. Then, perhaps conscious of the need for absolute trans-

Jojo Moyes talks to Martin Bell as he prepares to face Tatton electors

parency, he added: "You can call him if you like. I'll give you his number."

Mr Bell, trembling slightly as he ate, was doing his best to ban a political career as comfortably as his trademark white suit. But 24 hours after he announced his intention to stand, he was evidently realising the magnitude of presenting himself as incorruptible.

Catching sight of the *Daily Mail* headline about the IRA: "They Make Me Ashamed", he did a quick double-take just to check it was not referring to him.

"I'm very apprehensive about the inevitable mud that will be thrown," he admitted. "It is absolutely terrifying to be on the other side of the lines. I know all these journalists; some of them are my friends. But it's like I always wondered what it would be like being wounded, it's only when you're wounded that you actually know..."

Anyone he ever knew had already

been called by inquiring hawks. His ex-wife, Helen, he said, had been highly amused by it all: "When she married me I was a very straight, middle-of-the-road, over-put-your-head-above-the-parapet kind of chap."

Mr Bell would not disclose his policies on the basis that it would be inappropriate before he was formally accepted at both Labour and Liberal Democrat selection meetings later this week. He admitted candidly that having been out of the country for 17 of the last 20 years, he was "not up to speed" on many of the issues.

Pressed on his political leanings, he described himself as "centre", possibly liberal "with a very small 'L'". But his campaign, he said, would be based on "the trust issue".

"It's getting this constituency back to a place where it's like all the other constituencies and candidates fight each other on regular political issues," he said.

The fact that sleaze was persistently resurrected "must be driving the Conservative Party to distraction," he said, though not unsympathetically.

His standing, he thought, might actually help John Major to apply pressure on Mr Hamilton, "in which case I expect my letter of thanks from 10 Downing Street".

Mr Bell was at pains to stress that he was not anti-Conservative: "I'm in the rare position as an independent that I can conceive of a situation where, if the Conservatives were in opposition, I might vote with them against the Government. This is not an anti-Conservative intervention in any sense."

Some of Mr Hamilton's detractors, such as the Conservative Association Treasurer Tony Martin, have rejected the idea of a "left-wing" journalist standing in their election. But Mr Bell said his career had some political benefits.

"Journalists are always said to be bottom of pile in public esteem but I actually have many more friends than I know, because of being on television. When I was wounded, I received 1,000 letters from total strangers, so I do have a recognition factor. And generally, because I spent most of my life in war zones, I don't have a voting record. That's not something I'm particularly proud of, but it does help if you want to stand as an independent," he said.

Mr Bell, who was in the process of making a "good old grade A" documentary about the United Nations, now finds himself suspended from duty. ("Does that mean I have to sneak in at midnight to lay down a track?") He had also just finished a series of eight slots for Radio 4 on the relationship between news and the media.

One piece dealt specifically with the issue of corruption. It showed, Mr Bell said, that his concern about

the issue emerged long before the prospect of election came up. "This is not an isolated case - you have ministers being economical with the truth, the growth of lobbyists at Westminster, shady consultants, and the culture of greed," he said.

Yesterday, with £6,000 in his account ("you can see my bank statements if you like, they're up stairs"), he admitted that he did not know how he was going to manage his campaign.

"I don't think other parties are going to be providing resources to help. They can't. But I hope that there are activists who might help. There's been an amazing response from people so far," he said.

Just as he was campaigning for the high moral ground, so his campaign would be grounded in fairness, he insisted.

"This could get really brutal but I have to take very strong line on this campaign, that it's going to be dignified - perhaps with a little humour, that would be good," he said.

Sleaze row MP is adopted in secret

Christian Wolmar

Michael Brown, one of the MPs at the centre of the cash for questions affair, was adopted at a hastily convened secret constituency meeting on Monday night.

The meeting had been brought forward from Friday in order to avoid any publicity for the MP who has not made any public appearance since the controversy erupted again, just before Easter. Mr Brown has managed to escape publicity by lying low and by leaving his campaign headquarters empty for the past two weeks.



Michael Brown: Won over doubters with apology

In evidence in the inquiry chaired by Sir Gordon Downey, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, Mr Brown admitted that he had accepted £6,000 to lobby on behalf of a tobacco company in 1988 and 1989 to allow an oral tobacco product, Skoal Bandits, to be allowed into Britain without entering this in the Register of Members' Interests. He also admitted not telling civil servants and ministers whom he was lobby-

ing about his backing from the firm, United States Tobacco.

At the constituency meeting, Mr Brown won over doubters by apologising for having accepted the money and for not having declared it to the Inland Revenue until the payments became public knowledge in October 1996. He explained that, at the time, MPs were less well paid than they are now and that they were encouraged to engage in outside interests.

One of the opponents of Mr Brown on the local Conservative Association executive, Melanie Dickerson, said: "There was no point in trying to find an alternative candidate at this late stage. It would have been a futile gesture."

While Mr Brown has proved elusive over the past two weeks and his campaign headquarters has been deserted, he has already caused controversy by criticising his Labour opponent in an interview in the local paper, the *Grimsby Evening Telegraph*.

Replying to Labour's Shona McIsaac, a Wandsworth councillor, who had told him to come out of hiding, he said he had been working on constituency matters and "unlike sleazy journalists and sleazy tag candidates, I have responsibilities to the people who put me here right up until the dissolution of Parliament". He added: "I will not put up with some woman who has suddenly been interpolated into this constituency."

Ms McIsaac has been campaigning in the constituency for nearly two years since her selection, while Mr Brown has yet to start his campaign. Local Tories are very depressed about the situation in a seat which has a notional majority of 6,500 and opponents of Mr Brown say that many supporters are deserting the party.



Spreading conviction: Tony Blair taking the floor to field questions from Essex residents at Basildon Towngate Theatre yesterday

Photograph: Ian Walsley/Reuters

Gloss rubs off Labour's prize convert

Steve Boggan

She was the Essex woman Britain had been waiting to hear. A Basildon Conservative who was switching to Labour but first there were a few lingering doubts.

What, she wanted to know, about all those lefties hiding in the background waiting to pounce as soon as Tony Blair got into No 10?

The inquirer's name was Geraldine Evans and she earned a rousing cheer from a theatre full of Labour supporters when she announced her switch. It was the high point of a question-and-answer session at the Basildon Towngate Theatre yesterday when Mr Blair and John Prescott, his deputy, launched an assault on

the town - the constituency traditionally seen as a weather vane for political fortunes.

Having announced her conversion, Mrs Evans, 51, asked the toughest question of the day: "What gives many people concern is that we have not heard very much from the more radical side of your party and the unions. What guarantee can you give us that they will not get you into No 10, back you, then sack you?"

Coming from a lifelong Tory, the question could not be ducked and Mr Blair answered it with customary conviction. There was, he said, no "monstrous force" waiting to pounce. Labour had changed for good, rewritten Clause Four and was out turning back.

Afterwards, Mrs Evans was

the woman everyone wanted to interview. Had Mr Blair convinced her that the unions were in check? "Yes," she told the television crews, "he has won me over."

The audience was left with the impression that Mrs Evans, landlady of The Barge pub in Vange, was a new convert who might have gone back to the Tories had it not been for Mr Blair's assurances. However, this was the same Mrs Evans who was wheeled out by Labour two weeks ago when Gordon Brown, the shadow Chancellor, visited Basildon.

She was one of a group of switchers to be invited to an evening rally with Mr Brown at a time that would have missed Fleet Street deadlines. So she conducted an interview

with *The Independent* over a Labour press officer's mobile telephone.

"I'm not a plant," she said yesterday. "I was invited by Angela Smith [the Labour candidate] but I was told I could ask anything I like, or nothing at all. I suppose it would be less than honest to say that they thought I would come here and say something against them."

There is nothing wrong in what Labour or Mrs Evans did, but some in the audience who felt that they had witnessed a conversion might feel a little disappointed that they had not. In the final analysis, it is a demonstration of how a party can use an individual, in this case a public landlady, to deliver a powerful message on prime time television and in national newspapers.

It was a ploy that the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats criticised afterwards, at the end of a walkabout by Mr Blair and Mr Prescott during which they were cheered by hundreds of well-wishers.

"The whole thing was stage-managed," the Tory candidate, John Baron, said. "Naturally, I wasn't invited inside, but there were very few independent people out here. They were all put here by Labour."

Mr Baron's message was hunted somewhat by the presence of the Tory chicken carrying a placard that read: "Bananas - Is This Why He Won't Do a TV Debate?" But the event turned out to be successful for the Liberal De-

mocrat candidate, Terry Marsh, the former boxer, who was approached by two Labour supporters afterwards and offered support.

"I'm going to vote for you," said one of them, James Thompson, 19. "After hearing Tony Blair, I can't help feeling Labour is just offering Tory policies. I couldn't vote for them."

There was a suggestion from within the Labour camp that this defection, too, was stage-managed and that the defectors were, in fact, members of Militant. But even in an election generously populated with Conservatives in chicken costumes, 19-year-old members of Militant - an organisation that peaked some 10 years ago - seemed hardly credible.

THE HURRIED VOTER'S GUIDE

THE CAMPAIGN

Two issues dominated the day's campaigning: the churches' report on unemployment and the future of work, and the future of Neil Hamilton. The churches denounced what they suggested was the immorality of a society in which a prosperous majority got richer while a poor minority got poorer. They called for higher taxation, a minimum wage, more union rights, reform of the benefits system and more public spending to create jobs. Labour seized the opportunity to publish a dossier on how Britain was paying the price for a divided Britain, while the Conservatives were forced to respond to the churches' report. The Liberal Democrats launched their policy on crime, promising more Bobbies on the beat and laws to force local authorities to take action on crime prevention. In Tatton, Neil Hamilton, the Cheshire candidate who is at the centre of cash-for-questions allegations, prepared for his re-election meeting, due to take place last night. He and his wife, Christine, launched an ambush on a press conference being held by the BBC's Martin Bell, who is planning to stand as anti-sleaze candidate for the area, backed by the Liberal Democrats and Labour. Tony Blair and his deputy, John Prescott, were in the capital of Essex men, Basildon, in an attempt to win key marginal voters.

KEY ARGUMENTS

Labour and the Liberal Democrats spent much of the morning arguing that the churches' report supported many of their policies. Labour could claim the minimum wage, jobs for the unemployed, better education and better conditions of work. The Liberal Democrats added higher taxes to their list. The Conservatives went on the defensive, saying that Britain was better than most countries at narrowing social divisions and saying unemployment was higher in the rest of Europe. John Major was also forced to deny allegations that Lady Thatcher had personally forced him to defend Neil Hamilton. "I am not having the whole of this general election campaign being hijacked by one constituency. The Conservative constitution is quite clear - selection of candidates is for the local constituency," he said. Mr Hamilton and Mr Bell had a heated face-to-face confrontation. "There is no reason for an anti-corruption candidate," the MP said. Mr Bell told him: "I am going to stand as an independent. I am going to lay out my stall on a lot of issues."

GOOD DAY

The Rev David Sheppard, Bishop of Liverpool, entered the political fray with a media blitz to raise the much-neglected issue of unemployment and working conditions, highlighted in a Church report. Appearing on Channel 4 News, *Newsnight* and *5 Live*, Rev. Sheppard put across the message that the report was not targeted at any party but "the fatalism which wrings the hands and assumes that nothing can be done".

ONE TO REMEMBER

When John Major was asked by Sky's Adam Boulton whether he could promise that he would not increase VAT or expand its base, he replied: "We're a tax-cutting government by instinct. I see nothing in any of the statistics before me to suggest that we would have to change or alter the rate of VAT. I can't know what unexpected events may occur but we have no plans to do so and I can see nothing to suggest that we would have to do so."

BAD

The unfortunate taxman who didn't know that Neil Hamilton and Martin Bell were at the centre of the media scrum on Knutsford Heath yesterday morning. Walking past and being naturally curious, he climbed a photographer's step-ladder to get a better view. But he was soon brought down to earth by the angry snapper. The resulting scuffle was nearly as acrimonious as the one going on nearby between Hamilton and Bell.

HOGWASH

Second World War analogies were the order of the day as Sir James Goldsmith toured Newlyn to launch the Referendum Party campaign. "We're going to have a dictatorship in Europe," warned one of the "Brown Boys". "A political dictatorship. Hitler would have given his right arm for the sake of Sir James. He's the man of the hour. Just as Mr Churchill rallied us against Hitler, Goldsmith is rallying us against political dictatorship."

THE OTHER PARTIES

"You have been sold down the river," Sir James Goldsmith told disaffected trawlermen at the launch of the Referendum Party's national campaign from a quayside in Newlyn. "You have been offered in every single manifesto the same thing," he told the

assembled fishermen, before hoisting the Referendum Party flag over the harbour. Meanwhile, in Wales, Dafydd Wigley launched the manifesto of Plaid Cymru, insisting that higher taxes would be needed to reduce unemployment and pay for better public services.

MEDIA STAR

Christine Hamilton showed her bulldog spirit in front of scores of cameras and microphones, on the heat at both tried to reason with each other for a short time before Mrs Hamilton had had enough. "Do you accept my husband is innocent?" she demanded of the unhappy war reporter. The question was repeated until Mr Bell replied: "I don't know." Earlier in the morning she had told reporters: "My husband is not a quitter," coincidentally echoing Richard Nixon's "I am not a quitter."

هكذا من الأصل

Swashbuckling Goldsmith lands in port

Adulation and tricky questions marked the Referendum Party campaign launch

Clare Garner

Sir James Goldsmith, billionaire financier and ruler of the Referendum Party, rallied his common touch as he teamed up with Cornish fishermen to kick off his election campaign yesterday. He chose as his launchpad Newlyn Harbour, a fertile battleground for his "Rule Britannia Not Brussels" message. Although he trod a cautious path through the media pack swarming at his feet, by the time he reached the Chain Locker pub in Falmouth Harbour he was well into his stride with his man-of-the-people manner. Here was no ordinary politician. He didn't just shake hands, he hugged, kissed, and almost howled over an 85-year-old woman in a turquoise bonnet. Most of his supporters seemed to be in their eighties. Dr Stanley Gilson, 82, a lifelong Conservative, had come along out of a sense of duty. "I think it's the most serious situation we've experienced since the last war," he said. "I was running a blood transfusion service with the 8th Army and I saw many of our fine people killed. I feel a duty for us to stand our ground because we are going into a dictatorship in Europe. A political dictator, Hitler would have given his right arm for this."

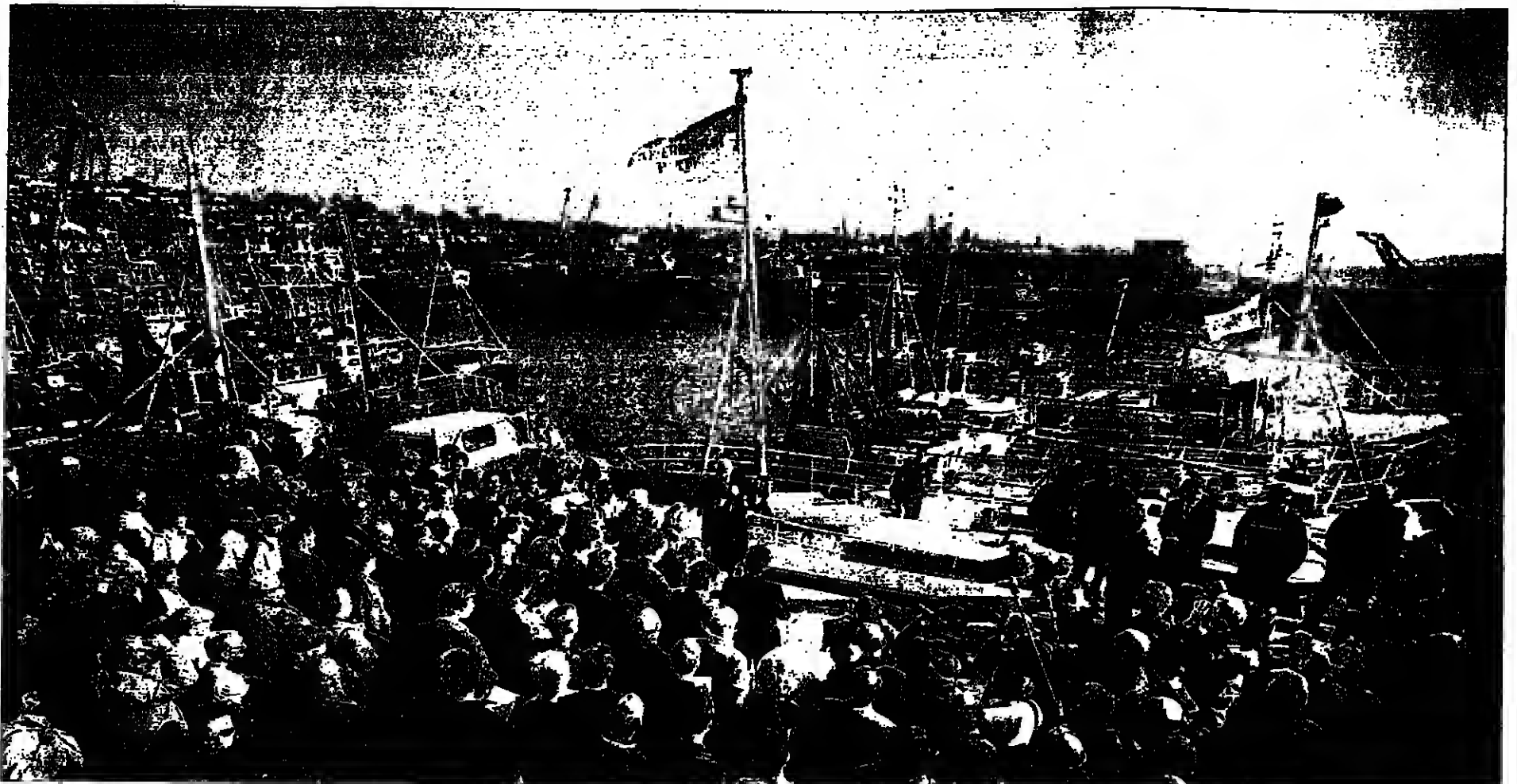
Dr Gilson was not the only one to liken Sir James to Winston Churchill. "I think he's a great man," he said. "He's the man for the hour. Just as Mr Churchill rallied us in 1939, so Sir James is rallying us against political dictatorship." After half a pint of Cafferlys and a plate of lemon sole, Sir James emerged from the darkened pub with renewed vigour. "This country will be turned into no more than a province," he said. "To use Tony Blair's words, Westminster will be no more than a parish council." Sir James urged people to vote regardless of whether the candidate would win because it would give "an indication to the Government that never again will we allow ourselves to be lied to, and have such a debate totally thwarted so that we don't know what is happening." The audience loved it. "Tell you what," muttered one. "It's about time a man like him became prime minister."

"Pure Churchill," another agreed. They clamoured to congratulate him. "God help you," said one. "Thank-you for being prepared to put your money behind something you believe in." Someone suggested that 20 minutes of Sir James on television would be "worth a fortune". But it is not power - or money for that matter - Sir James was after. "I'm far too old to want power," he told one sceptical journalist. Rather, he wanted "to let the people decide."

"A vote for the Referendum Party is not a vote for us. It's not a vote for any of the prospective parliamentary candidates. It's a vote for yourself, and others like you, to be able to get the right to decide... otherwise, you deserve to be a slave to the bureaucrats in Brussels and long way you remain that way."

To some degree, Sir James felt he had already succeeded. "We now see a new John Major and a new Tony Blair," he said. "For how long?" shouted a member of the public, at which point Sir James reached for a piece of impromptu humour. "They change daily. It's lovely," he said. Sir James did not however, take kindly to criticism. "Can I ask you?" ventured an elderly man, catching him before he was whisked away in a black Ford Granada. "I'm not being rude, but when you were an MEP, you never supported Cornish fishermen."

He immediately felt the full weight of Sir James come down on him. "That's not true. The Liberal Democrat MEP told me that this morning... he's a liar. Tell him from me, if he doesn't believe me, let him sue."



Shipshape: Billionaire financier Sir James Goldsmith rallying Cornish fishermen at the Referendum Party campaign launch in Newlyn Harbour yesterday Photograph: Brian Harris

Labour Sherlock snubs Bottomley

Simon Reeve

It was the case of the missing photo-opportunity. Leading members of the cast of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* mysteriously disappeared yesterday evening, just before a photo-call with Virginia Bottomley and the prospective Tory candidate for Cheltenham.

Mrs Bottomley had been at the Everyman Theatre in Gloucestershire town hoping to have her picture taken with a group of famous actors. However, the smallest amount of sleuthing would have revealed that the star of the play, Michael Cashman, is a prominent supporter of the Labour Party who spent much of the weekend canvassing with prospective Labour MPs in London and Kent. As such he makes an unlikely choice for a Conservative Party publicity shot.



Michael Cashman: the vanishing detective

my time."

It was only when *The Independent* contacted the Conservative Party and reminded them of Cashman's political affiliations that they realised there might be a problem.

"I thought that it might not go altogether smoothly. I gather they have rather strong views," said a spokesman for the local constituency party. "This was an informal visit and we didn't say we had to see this person or that person. What we wanted to do was have a discussion about the arts."

What the people of Cheltenham will think of this snub to a prominent government minister is unclear. Members of the local Conservative Association famously snubbed John Taylor, who was confronted by local racism when he tried to become the Tories first black MP.

Mr Todman, the Conservative hoping to beat the incumbent Liberal Democrat, said he was unconcerned about the actors' boycott. "The suggestion that we should meet them originally came from the theatre management. It's an opportunity the actors are missing, not us. I'm not disappointed."

It was the theatre management who were disappointed, having hoped for good publicity for their play, which only started on Monday.

"We thought it would be quite a good idea," said Vanessa Ball, from the Everyman Theatre. "It seemed like a perfect chance to meet the person in charge of the arts, but what the actors do is entirely up to them. I'll put on the deerstalker and magnifying glass to make up for them."

MEDIA WATCH

Dimbleby too tough on Blair, say Labour voters

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

The BBC's switchboard was swamped with calls from Labour Party supporters complaining about David Dimbleby's questioning of Tony Blair in his first big interview of the election.

Mr Dimbleby deliberately adopted glasses and a short haircut to give himself a headmasterly manner to conduct his most aggressive ever interview, according to experts in the black arts of television interviewing.

"That was the toughest David Dimbleby has ever been," said Des Wilson, former Liberal Democrat spin doctor.

"You got the feeling that the BBC thinks Blair has given few big interviews and may have ducked out of the debate, so they were determined to make sure they put him to the test."

Mr Wilson claims Mr Dimbleby's attitude was apparent in his remark that Mr Blair was "relatively young". "He was like the headmaster with the insubordinate prefect right from the starting gun," he said.

Westminster insiders have speculated that Mr Dimbleby has been stung by comparisons with the popular and aggressive *Newsnight* presenter, Jeremy Paxman, and *Today's* John Humphrys, and has adopted a more aggressive interviewing technique. The BBC denies there has been a change of style.

Mr Wilson believes Mr Dimbleby is a tougher interviewer than he is generally given credit for. "Because he is mild mannered and doesn't sneer at you, Dimbleby doesn't attract attention, but he is very sharp."

"But by dragging up his record from 10 or 12 years ago,

he played into Blair's hands. Blair could then turn it into a list of how much the Labour Party has changed."

"Some of the calls to the duty officer claimed that we were too soft on him, that it was a party political broadcast for Labour, so we cannot win," said Panorama spokesman John Steel.

"Politicians receive considerable media training and coaching and are adept at not answering questions they don't want to answer. So we need to find equally effective ways of making sure they do answer."

Michael Barrett, the former presenter of *Nationwide* who runs a media training agency for businessmen, said: "You give someone media training to get them to tell the truth and get their message across. But then I don't train politicians."

Leading article, page 17

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Major talks big to small businesses

Anthony Bevins and
Colin Brown

John Major yesterday announced a package of special aid for small businesses, including rates relief for about 750,000 shops and small companies.

Launching the Conservative small-business manifesto in Birmingham, Mr Major said: "The most outstanding of all Britain's business success stories is that of our small businesses. Whereas Labour made big businesses small, we've helped small businesses grow big."

The key measure in the man-

ifesto was a "fairer" rating system, with the Prime Minister promising that if re-elected, he would introduce a new rates allowance scheme, "under which businesses will pay no rates at all on the first £1,000 of the rateable value of their premises".

"Over three-quarters of a million small businesses will benefit," he said. "That's 90 per cent of small firms with turnovers below £100,000 - 140,000 will pay no rates at all."

Jan Lang, President of the Board of Trade, said: "We'll finance this by making a small increase of 2.5 pence in the

overall business rate package."

The move will save small companies around £430 a year in business rates, according to the Federation of Small Businesses. But a Downing Street source said: "It is not a Robin Hood measure. The uniform business rate is already tilted against small businesses. This redresses the balance."

Mr Lang said other measures to be taken by a new Conservative government would include a streamlining of industrial tribunals and further simplification of the administration of pay as you earn (PAYE) tax and na-

tional insurance contributions for small companies.

Attacking Labour, Mr Major said: "How can you take seriously a party that claims to be interested in the future of small businesses, but has proposed to put burden after burden on small firms?"

"How can you take seriously a party that proposes to sign the European Social Charter ... with all the costs on small businesses that implies?"

"How can you take seriously a party that boasts it is going to introduce a minimum wage, but having done so for a long time

cannot ... tell us what the level of that minimum wage will be?"

Mr Major told the press conference it was no use pretending that a minimum wage would not cost jobs or that wages would not rise. "What they have to offer small businesses is more regulation, more job losses, more tax, more control, higher uniform business rates and nothing but contraction of the UK economy," he said.

But Labour's employment spokesman, Ian McCartney, said the Tory initiative was "the most desperate performance

yet from a government that is out of ideas and is now running out of time."

Earlier, Gordon Brown, shadow Chancellor, told an election press conference in London that the party had received a series of personal endorsements from business leaders for its plans for a £50 tax rebate for employers who took on young people under the party's "new deal programme".

"And we can announce that we have reached agreement with the Building Employers Confederation, who say they can co-operate with Labour to provide work

and training for 10,000 young unemployed people."

Labour's list of "personal endorsements" included David Waterstone, chairman of Asda International; Bryan Sanderson, executive director of British Petroleum; Swarj Paul, chairman of Caparo Group Ltd; Christopher Haskins, chairman of Northern Foods; Paul Hamlyn, of Hamlyn Publishing; and Nick Scheele, chairman and chief executive of Jaguar Cars Ltd.

Mr Scheele said later that he had not specifically endorsed the idea of the £50 rebate, although he told BBC Radio 4's *World at*

One programme: "I have certainly endorsed the fact that we need to focus on the issue and I am comfortable with doing that. But whether this scheme is better than any other I really don't know."

However, in a later statement, Mr Scheele added: "I believe that youth unemployment is one of the major problems facing our country and I support, in principle, proposals such as a £50-a-week rebate to employers who take on young unemployed people as part of the vital measures necessary to tackle this problem."



Prime position: Ladies waiting for a glimpse of Mr Major as he visited Worcester yesterday

Photograph: Tom Pilstow

Worcester Woman gets the elbow

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

John Major yesterday disowned "Worcester Woman", the key female floating voter targeted by the main political parties, after evidence that she may about to jilt the Conservatives.

There was plenty of evidence in Worcester as the Prime Minister visited the famous china factory in the town that its floating voter has yet to make up her mind and may do so only on polling day.

Conservative strategists coined the phrase Worcester Woman when they realised that women in the C2 socio-economic group, married with two children, were responsible for rescuing Mr Major from defeat in the 1992 general election by swinging behind the Tories. It was this key, well-to-do work-

ing class working woman, rather than blue-collar Basildon man, to whom they tailored their campaign.

The Tories also believed that she lived in the key marginals in the West Midlands typified by the Worcester seat, where the Tories are defending a majority of less than 3,000 on changed boundaries after the sitting MP, Peter Luff moved to the less marginal mid-Worcester constituency.

Michael Heseltine denied the existence of Worcester Woman when he visited the town last week and yesterday the Prime Minister said: "I certainly never coined the phrase Worcester Woman."

"I'm sure the people of Worcester, women as well as men, will cast their votes on the basis of the issues that matter to people - their prospects for

the future, for jobs and prosperity, for better education, health and other public services."

But a vox pop among the pushchairs in the High Street as Mr Major toured the Royal Worcester porcelain factory showed that many housewives are thinking of switching their votes because of their concern for public services.

Helen Witherick, 33, married to a carpenter, with a three-year-old daughter, Alice, complained about the changes and cut-backs in education. "There has been so much change in such a short time. Everyone is very unsettled," she said.

Mrs Witherick said she had decided to vote Conservative at the last minute last time and could do the same again. "It is definitely possible that I could vote for Tony Blair. It is equal-

ly possible I could still vote for John Major."

Christine Bennett, 37, with two children aged 12 and nine, voted Conservative last time but said that she was undecided at the moment.

A nursery nurse, she also complained about the state of education. "It is because we have had a lot of changes with education including the national curriculum, and the health service has had a lot of changes. I think it has been too much too soon and it has sent a lot of service into chaos. This is what worries me."

However, there were some worrying signs for Mr Blair. Mrs Bennett said: "I am unclear of Labour's position because of the changes they keep making to their policies. I am very unclear what they stand for."

Another housewife, Claire

Williams, 32, with three children was disillusioned with the Labour Party under Mr Blair. "I voted Labour last time but I am thinking of changing because Labour have moved too far to the right," she said.

Worcester has never voted for a Labour MP in its history. It came closest to doing so in the Labour landslide in 1945 when the Tories held on by four votes.

Labour already has polling evidence to show that they could pull it off this time. That evidence includes Susan Denning, 45, a personal assistant in a firm of solicitors, married with two teenage children. She said: "I voted Tory last time but I am thinking of voting Labour now. Tony Blair is a man of the people. He is young and he knows what people want. The Conservatives have had long enough."



by Aanonymous

I was looking straight at the Candidate when he first thought that he might be about to die. For one second, as the figure approached him, I saw his grin become a stupid smile of fear and apprehension. It happened like this. We were all of us - press, Candidate, minders and Deputy John - inside one of those civic theatres that most towns of over 50,000 have somewhere in their centres. This one was in an Essex new town, but despite being only a few years old, was - like most things civic or municipal - looking a bit sad. You know, the loos weren't quite clean, the white doors were covered in grubby fingerprints, and bits like the nibbles of large mice, had been chipped off any jutting surface by the passage of furniture, wheelchairs and time.

The Candidate was there to do a Q&A with 300 switchers. But where do you get switchers at 11am on a Tuesday morning? Especially when you can only give them 10 hours' notice. Do you accost them in the street and say, "Be a devil. Take this morning off work and listen to the Candidate. Phone in sick, whatever?" Not in Britain. So the grubby theatre's stalls and three balconies were filled - not with switchers - but with the switched. Particularly with the elderly switched.

Perhaps it was the white hair, wind-cheaters and walking sticks that made the Candidate feel more than usually mortal, as he and Deputy John took their places on the low platform in the centre of the auditorium. He may well still have been feeling the bruises from the previous night's TV encounter with the Big Cheese BBC Interviewer. Certainly he realised (despite the encouraging noises from his loyal staff) that the first 10 minutes had seen him look flustered and defensive before the patronising, hectoring onslaught of the smooth man with half-glasses. The Big Cheese clearly felt that 43 was far too young an age at which to be Prime Minister. After all, he had smaller brothers - Little Cheeses - older than that. It had taken the Candidate half a prime-time show to get back on terms.

And perhaps it was also the presence of Deputy John on the platform; a fleshly reminder of the limitations of a leader's political power. One disgruntled outburst from this peculiar figure - this squat portion of sweet

and sour politics - and it could all still be over, no matter what the polls and the experts said. Right now, with another delicate tack to the right just in the process of being made, he needed Deputy John kept on hand. So there he was.

The local hopeful - black skirt and jacket and shoulder length red hair - told the gathering that the two men were there, and they strolled on. To be met by a nice clap, a good shout and a three-quarters standing (or at least, struggling upright) ovation. Smiling, the Candidate stood at the microphone and raised his arms for quiet. The applause stopped and everybody subsided once more into their seats.

No. Not everybody. For as he began to speak, a weird figure arose stiffly from his chair two rows back, and shuffled purposefully towards him, holding something in her outstretched hands.

She certainly seemed to be a harmless woman: a tall old girl in an antique puce dress with lacy facings, her iron-grey hair in a long, unfashionable, page-boy cut. No-one in the audience seemed at all concerned, but he knew that this was an unscheduled old woman; there was no piece of paper on which it was written that Lottie Lebur or Sylvia Socrates would present flowers at 11.06am.

In the awful slow motion seconds that it took before the figure came within striking distance of him, a host of images and warnings went through his mind: the secret service chaps who'd briefed him on the dangers of being a Prime Minister in all but name, the detective assigned to him who had told him what to look out for, the images of the young Kennedy brothers grinning their last, of Norman Bates at the motel done up like his old ma. He pictured the knife clutched stiffly through the surrounding carnations; the page-boy wig falling away to reveal the contorted features of the sated madman. Above all he felt the horrid realisation that he would have to put up with being stabbed if necessary, because the alternatives - wrestling a genuine old lady to the ground, or running away - were disastrous.

And so he grinned madly at her, held his arm out for the flowers, and breathed heavily when a bunch of harmless pinkies was pressed into his sweating hand.

Perhaps it was the white hair and walking sticks that made him feel more than usually mortal

None of the political parties has put forward a programme which offers much real hope of improvement to those in greatest need - report by the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland

May I suggest that [Martin Bell] wears his flak jacket back to front? In politics the danger comes from being stabbed in the back - Pat Dossy, the Prime Minister's sister

I am not a politician, I despise politicians - Sir James Goldsmith, leader of the Referendum Party and MEP

The positive reasons for a Labour vote have been de-

QUOTES OF THE DAY

liberally kept vague. Why put people off? - Labour's Austin Mitchell

All I want to know is whether you think I am guilty - Neil Hamilton, face to face with Martin Bell

Basildon has earned a special place in British politics - Tony Blair wooing floating voters in Basildon, heartland of Essex Man, Compiled by Sam Coates

Plug this URL into your browser from tonight and you will be able to follow *The Independent's* general election coverage - daily reports from the campaign trail and our award-winning commentators - on the Net. You'll also be able to take part in online debates with *Independent* journalists and the candidates who will be seeking your vote on 1 May. Tonight from 7pm to 9pm *The Independent's* Polly Toynbee, will be in the debating chamber. *The Independent* online. It is. Are you?

Best beer or bitter dregs?

Barrie Clement

Away with the eccentric Peter Snow and his silly swingometer. That bibulous old aristocrat of Westminster, the Marquis of Granby, has introduced the infinitely preferable beerometer.

The Marquis, a public house off Smith Square and within 300 yards of all the party headquarters, is enticing people to vote with their thirst.

Tony Bowler, the licensee, has placed three pumps on the bar emblazoned with the faces of the three main party leaders. Customers are invited to choose one of them.

The beer they draw is all gentlemen's luncheon bitter of a moderate 4-per-cent strength and is identical. The choice is made purely on political grounds.

The sales of each beer are charted on the beerometer on the pub wall, installed on Monday night.

Yesterday Tony Blair was comfortably in the lead with 100 pints. John Major second with



Beerometer: Tony Bowler, landlord of The Marquis, pulling pints Photograph: John Voos

an abstemious 20 pints and Paddy Ashdown third with 15. Mr Bowler, interrogated on the poor showing of the Prime Minister, believes that officials at Conservative Central Office, the nearest party HQ, about 50 yards away, have been banned from his pub.

"I think it's because senior Conservatives thought they might give the selection strategy away after a few drinks."

Mr Bowler took the precaution of putting the beerometer beyond the reach of the tallest customers in order to ensure that they did not nudge up the

indicator and artificially boost the showing of their favoured candidate.

There could be another explanation for the pre-eminent showing of Mr Blair - New Labour might have found a role for those ghastly beer-swilling union leaders.

political shorts

Scargill to contest safe Labour seat

Arthur Scargill, leader of the Socialist Labour Party, announced last night that he will be standing against Alan Howarth in the South Wales constituency of Newport East. His decision to stand in this safe Labour seat will mean a direct clash between Mr Scargill's traditional old-style socialist party, and Tony Blair's "new" Labour.

His opponent is a former Conservative education minister, who defected to Labour in 1995. Mr Scargill, president of the National Union of Mineworkers, formed the SLP last year after what he describes as Labour's decision to "ditch its constitutional commitment to common ownership and abandon any pretence of being a socialist party". His party is fielding 65 candidates in the general election.

Accused Tory selected

Michael Brown, one of the Conservative MPs at the centre of the cash-for-questions affair, was adopted at a hastily held secret constituency association meeting on Monday night. The meeting had been brought forward from Friday in order to avoid any publicity for the Tory candidate for Brigg and Cleethorpes, who has not made any public appearance since the controversy erupted again just before Easter.

Parliament is dissolved

Parliament was formally dissolved at 1.50pm yesterday afternoon. The Queen signed a Royal Proclamation during a special meeting of the Privy Council at Windsor Castle at noon, which was held at the request of the Prime Minister. Following this writs were sent to every constituency, asking them to prepare to elect a new MP on 1 May. The deadline for receipt of nominations for candidates is 4pm on Wednesday 16 April.

election'97

‘Wherever we went we saw increasing riches and poverty. It is wrong’



Liverpool life: On their research tour around Britain, Church leaders were ‘shocked and saddened’ by the growing gap between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’

Photograph: Craig Easton

Churches shocked by inequity

Church leaders said yesterday they were ‘shocked and saddened’ by what they saw as they travelled around Britain and Ireland researching their study on the future of work. The contrast between the favoured majority and the excluded minority should not be tolerated, they said. ‘Wherever we went we saw increasing riches and poverty side by side. It is wrong, in such prosperous times as ours, for men and women to be deprived for long periods of the chance to earn their living.’

The Bible

The report quotes the Bible and says people should beware of worshipping false gods, ‘including such modern idols as political dogma or the market economy’.

The list also includes the idea of the ‘jubilee’ when ‘debts are cancelled and slaves are set free,’ and the need for people to show ‘a generous spirit, and not pursue economic advantage to the limit’. It adds that only a just and caring society can

Who wrote the report

Working party:
Chairman: Patrick Caidwell, former director of Council for Industry and HE
Exec Sec: Andrew Britton, former director of NIESR
Members:
Rev Bill Allen, director of pastoral studies at Spurgeon's College
Clive Brooke, joint gen sec, PTC tax union
Margaret Burns, Council for Social Welfare
John Cole, former political editor, BBC
Gabrielle Cox, co-ordinator greater Manchester Low Pay Unit
Rev Erik Cramb, industrial mission in Scotland
Ricky Davies, director of management services of Associated Church clubs
Alan Deacon, prof of social policy, Uni of Leeds
Kumar Jacob, Criterion Software Ltd
Dr Eleanor James, chair of Wales Rural Forum
Rev Dian Leppington, industrial mission in Leeds
Rev Dr Peter Selby, bishop-designate of Worcester

Tony Stoughton-Harris, dep chair of S Electricity
Dr Nicholas Prosser, chair of S Electricity
Liverpool Hope University College
Sponsoring party:
Chairman: Rt Rev David Sheppard, Bishop of Liverpool
Secretary: Ruth Badger, Board for Social Responsibility, Church House
Members: Marion Beales, Free Church Federal Council
Rt Rev Michael Bourke (C of E)
Ruth Clarke (United Reformed Church)
Ven John Davies (CYTUN - Churches in Wales)
Lady Marion Fraser (Church of Scotland)
Rev Robin Hunt (Methodist)
Rev Simon Jones (Baptist Union)
Rev John Jones (RHC)
Hugh Mellor (Society of Friends)
Rev Mark Nicholson (Black Majority Churches)
Rev Dr Gordon McMullan (Church of Ireland)

achieve real, lasting prosperity and that both suffering and fortune should be shared.

Unemployment and Poverty

Real unemployment is twice as high as the level shown in official figures, the report says. The number of people who had no

job and who wanted one was around 4.5 million last summer, while government figures stood at about half that number.

Between 1979 and 1994, average household incomes rose by 40 per cent more than inflation, but for the poorest 10 per cent of households they fell by 13 per cent.

Society is divided between prosperous people and those who are unemployed or in temporary, insecure work. Most unemployed people desperately want work, and many become isolated and depressed.

The market should not be left to sort out the problem – that leads to low wages. The weakening of trade union power also explains the increase in poverty.

Although the public say unemployment is a great evil, public opinion has not been effectively mobilised to demand a remedy. ‘What is lacking is a sense of community, such as we had during the Second World War and for a generation afterwards.’

Expanding employment

Jobs should be created in the public sector, in health, education and community care, housing and construction. This should be paid for mainly through higher taxation: the ratio of tax to national income in Britain is lower than in most European countries. It could be raised without causing serious

harm to the economy. ‘There is a Christian case for redistributive taxation, based on both justice and compassion, which we support,’ the report says.

Employers’ National Insurance contributions could be cut, or abolished, for unskilled jobs. Real jobs in the community should be created, funded partly through public spending.

Fair pay and conditions

There should be a statutory minimum wage: ‘We find the very low rates of pay now being offered unjust and offensive to human dignity.’ Employees should have protection against unfair dismissal after a short period, probably a few months.

Benefits

‘We do not believe that the level of benefits paid in Britain today is generally adequate to support a decent standard of life.’ The only reasonable solution is to get people off benefit by increasing employment.

Parties’ economic flaws revealed

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

The tax and spending policies set out in the party manifestos will be put under the spotlight this morning. The results are likely to prove uncomfortable for both main parties, as the torch probing the dark corners of their economic strategies is being wielded by the fiercely independent Institute for Fiscal Studies.

The IFS election briefing will look at how much better off different categories of people have become since 1979 and 1992, which will provide opponents of the Government with plenty of useful ammunition. The Treasury’s own figures show that taxes have increased as a share of national income since both dates, and the IFS analysis is expected to show that the well-off have done much better than the poor out of 18 years of Conservative government.

Today’s report will assess the underlying state of the public finances, and how big a ‘black hole’ there is in the government’s budget. Other think-tanks, notably the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, have said the shortfall between revenues and expenditure is about £14bn bigger than would be expected at this stage of the business cycle.

The document will also note that the Conservative manifesto leaves open the possibility of a radical contraction in the boundaries of the welfare state via the privatisation of pensions and possibly other areas of government provision.

The charges will carry all the more weight because the IFS has carved out for itself a uniquely authoritative position in commenting on taxation. Its reputation for being non-partisan will be enhanced by other conclusions in today’s report.

This will criticise Gordon Brown’s pledge to stick to the existing government spending totals for the first two years of a Labour government. Andrew Dilnot, the IFS’s director, has made no secret of his view that the sharp slowdown in real terms spending implied by the existing plans will be catastrophic for the provision of some public services.

The institute has argued that the minimum wage will have little effect on poverty and could cause unemployment if the mechanism for uprating it is not designed with great care. The reason is that a minimum wage would do nothing for the out of work and pensioners, who make up the bulk of the poorest tenth of the population.

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election '97

Ashdown slates lack of passion in Labour

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

Labour is fighting a campaign devoid of passion and any crusading spirit of radicalism, because it is concentrating on winning the support of a small number of target voters, Paddy Ashdown said last night.

In a scathing analysis of the way in which the Conservatives and Labour have decided to fight the election, the Liberal Democrat leader told a London rally the had been too kind last week when he compared them to Punch and Judy.

"The truth is that what we have is Tweedledum and Tweedledee politics, with millions of British people excluded from their own election contest because, in truth, both other parties exclude them from their priorities for the future."

"This election campaign is shamed thus far by the cosy complicity of Labour and Conservatives to turn the other cheek."

While Mr Ashdown attacked the way the Conservatives had smashed the One Nation Toryism that had motivated a whole generation of Conservatives, his attack on Labour was more surprising because of the closeness of the two parties on such issues as the constitution.

Having recalled the distance the Tories had travelled since Margaret Thatcher spoke of St Francis of Assisi's search for harmony, truth, faith and hope in 1979, Mr Ashdown quoted Neil Kinnock, from 1983. Then he warned that if the Tories were re-elected: "I warn you not to be young, I warn you not to be old, I warn you not to get old."

Mr Ashdown said that while he had opposed Labour's socialist policies in the 1980s, "at least there was some passion. At least there was some conviction, not just calculation." Mr Kinnock's words "would freeze" on Mr Blair's lips, he said.

"His so-called radical centre concentrates £20m of campaign expenditure and every waking moment of his pollsters, focus groups, ad men and spin doctors, not on the long-term needs of the country but on the short-term concerns of just 70,000 voters in their keys seats."

Mr Ashdown said it was an indictment of the electoral system that any party should concentrate its attention on 70,000 people out of 56 million.

He said the Liberal Democrats alone accepted the principle of extra taxation to deal with the problems of underprivilege, although Labour is committed to a £3bn windfall levy on privatised utilities.

But in a reference to his own commitment to raise the basic rate of income tax by a penny to pay for improved investment in education, Mr Ashdown said: "It is our conviction that neglect of a decent education for any group weakens our country as a whole."

"It is our conviction that neglect of decent opportunities for anyone diminishes opportunity for everyone. It is our conviction that neglect of decent conditions for some communities in Britain imperils the safety of all communities in Britain."

Mr Ashdown said Harold Wilson had once said that the Labour Party was a crusade or it was nothing.

"Well, in this campaign, it certainly isn't a crusade," he said.

No politician admits to a U-turn, but sometimes they have to ask ...



Did I really say that?

They are the poll promises Labour politicians would prefer not to have made, writes Randeep Ramesh. Drawn from election manifestos over the past two decades, and obscured by the mists of time, they advocate withdrawal from the European community, higher taxes and unilateral nuclear disarmament. Candidates would today be facing

expulsion from new Labour if they were to dare utter such thoughts. Yet these are comments by Tony Blair and some of his closest colleagues. It is little wonder that Mr Blair grew testy when reminded by David Dimbleby on Monday's *Panorama* about his support for CND and his previous passionate defence of trade union rights.

Tony Blair told voters in Sedgefield in 1983:

"We must 'negotiate a withdrawal from the EEC which has drained our natural resources and destroyed jobs'."

David Blunkett, 26, in Sheffield in 1974:

"Wanted to 'begin to restore the sanity and harmony in industrial relations by repealing the provocative Industrial Relations Act ... restore the savings cuts in education and the social services ... take development land into public ownership and stop speculation in property and land'."

Paul Boateng in 1987 told voters in Brent:

"The solution [to the Irish situation] must be a political one based on a united Ireland as an immediate political goal and a phased withdrawal of troops within the lifetime of the next Labour parliament."

Gordon Brown in 1983, as an editor on Scottish Television's programme *What's Your Problem?* Promised "more help for

those in need ... Families better off as child benefit rises by £2 a week ... Pensioners better off as the link with rising earnings is restored and our old people are paid the money that Mrs Thatcher stole from them."

Frank Dobson, 39, in 1979: Campaigned against British membership of the Common Market. He still believes we should not have gone in and that we should come out.

Chris Smith, 31, in 1983: Supports CND, believes "The Tories' union-bashing laws have made it impossible for trade unions to do their job and

represent the interests of working people. Labour will restore their rights. Labour is proud to be a socialist party. We must build a society that is based on people's needs and not on the blind pursuit of profit."

John Prescott in 1966: Wanted a "University of the Air" for budding broadcasters.

Harriet Harman in 1983: Promised "where the Tories gamble with our future by vast spending on nuclear weapons, Labour will safeguard the country with a non-nuclear defence programme."

Margaret Jackson (later Beckett) in 1979:

Warned that the Tories would sell off the United Kingdom's stake in British Petroleum and that "Labour will keep our control over our greatest national asset and use it to help you."

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تمتذنا من الأصل

International conference celebrates the global expansion of a language that no longer belongs to Spain

Tuning in to the new lingua franca

Novelist and Nobel laureate
Gabriel Garcia Marquez
reflects on the power of words

When I was 12 I was about to be knocked over by a bicycle. A priest who was passing saved me with a shout: "Watch out!" The cyclist fell to the ground. The priest, without stopping, said: "Did you see the power of the word?" I learned it that day. Now we know, furthermore, that the Maya Indians knew it since the times of Christ, and with such rigour that they had a special god for words.

This power was never as great as it is today. Humanity will enter the third millennium under the empire of words. It is not the case that the image is displacing them or can extinguish them. On the contrary, it is empowering them: never in the world were there

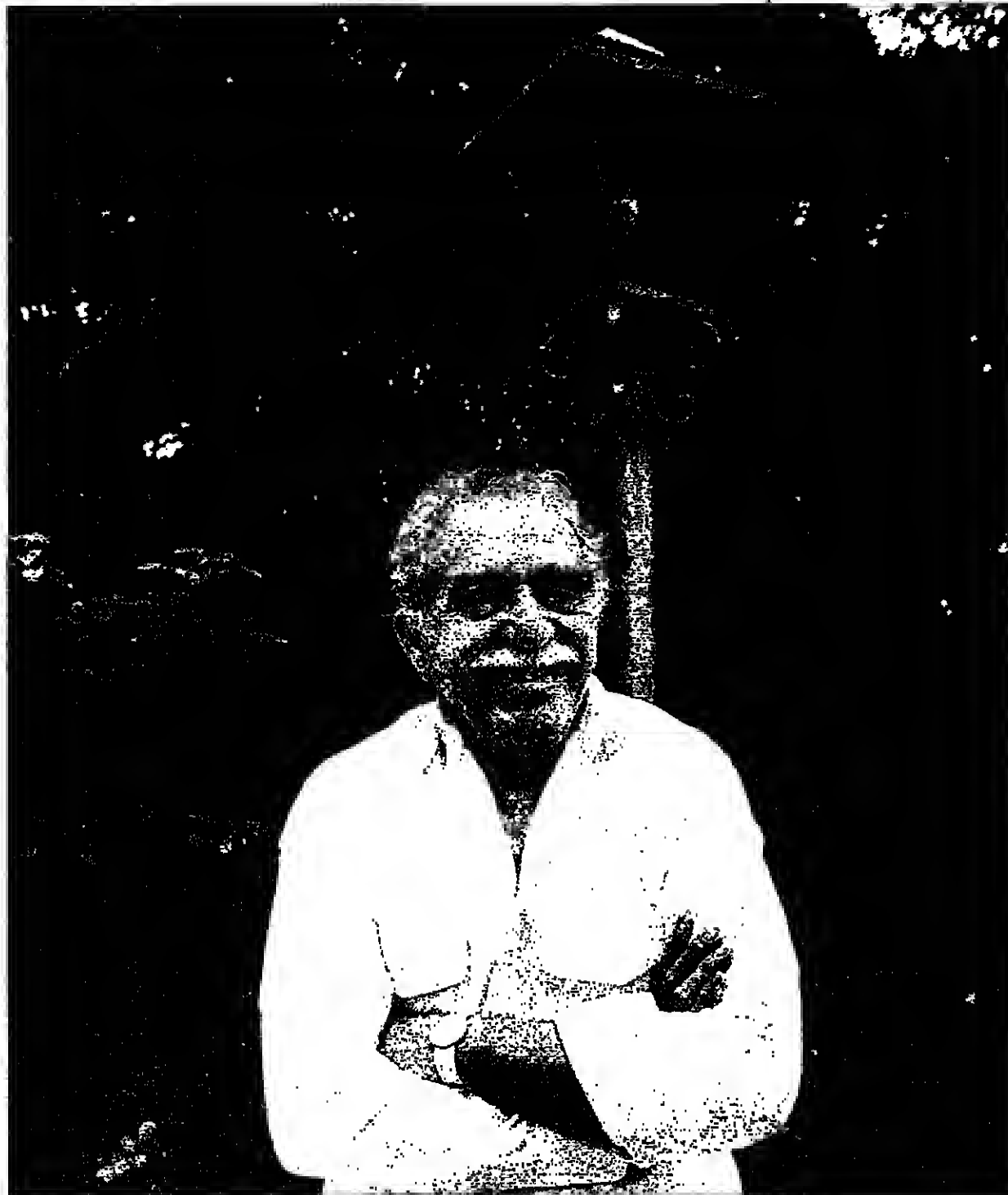
like other languages to date, but for its vitality, its creative dynamic, its vast cultural experience, its speed and its power of expansion, covering 19 million square kilometres and 400 million speakers by the end of this century. A master of Spanish letters in the United States has rightly said that his hours in class help him interpret between Latin Americans of various countries. It is striking that the verb "pasar" (to pass) has 54 meanings, while in Ecuador there are 105 names for the male sexual organ, while the word "condoliente" (in other words sharing suffering, expressing condolence) which is self-explanatory and which we need so much, has not yet been invented.

A young French journalist is dazzled by the poetic discoveries he finds in every step of our domestic life. That a little boy, kept awake by the intermittent, said bawling of a lamb said: "It's like a lighthouse." That a campfollower of the Colombian Guajira region refused an infusion of lemon-balm because it tasted of Good Friday. That Don Sebastian de Covarrubias, in his memorable dictionary, wrote with his own hand that yellow is the colour of lovers, making the masculine "el color" feminine - "la color". Haven't we often taken coffee that tastes of window, bread that tastes of corner, cherry that tastes of kiss?

These are ample proof of a language that has long been too fat for its skin. Our contribution must not be to tighten its belt, but to free it from its iron rules so that it enters the coming century like Peter into his house. In this sense I venture to suggest to this wise audience that we simplify the grammar before the grammar ends up making us simple. Let us humanise its rules, let us learn that indigenous languages to which we owe so much can still teach and enrich us, let us assimilate well and quickly technical and scientific neologisms before they infiltrate us indigestibly, let us negotiate in good faith with barbaric gerunds, endemic "thats", and

parasitical "whiches". Let's pension off spelling, terror of the human being from the cradle: let's bury the prehistoric "h", let's sign a limitation treaty with "g" and "j", and use more reason in written accents.

And what about our "b" for "bufo" (ass) and our "v" for "vaca" (cow) which our Spanish grandparents brought us as if they were two separate consonants, so there's always one too many?



Garcia Marquez idiom spin free and are hurled towards the irresistible fate of a global language Photograph: Katz

And for our multilingual readers, here is the author's speech in its original form

A mis 12 años de edad estuve a punto de ser atropellado por una bicicleta. Un señor cura que pasaba me salvó con un grito: "¡Cuidado!". El ciclista cayó a tierra. El señor cura, sin detenerse, me dijo: "¿Viste lo que es el poder de la palabra?" Ese día lo supe. Ahora sabemos, además, que los mayas lo sabían desde los tiempos de Cristo, y con tanto rigor que tenían un dios especial para las palabras. Nunca como hoy ha sido tan grande ese poder. La humanidad entrará en el tercer milenio bajo el imperio de las palabras. No es cierto que la imagen esté desplazándolas ni que pueda extinguirse.

Al contrario, está potenciándose: nunca hubo en el mundo tantas palabras con tanto alcance, autoridad y albedrío como en la inmensa Babel de la vida actual. Palabras inventadas, maltratadas o sacralizadas por la prensa, por los libros desechables, por los carteles de publicidad; habladas y cantadas por la radio, la televisión, el cine, el teléfono, los altavoces públicos; gritadas a brocha gorda en las paredes de la calle o susurradas al oído en las penumbras del amor. No; el gran derrotado es el silencio. Las cosas tienen ahora tantos nombres en tantas lenguas que ya no es fácil saber cómo se llaman en ninguna. Los idiomas se dispersan sueltos de madrina, se mezclan y confunden, desaparecen hacia el destino ineluctable de un lenguaje global...

Llama la atención que el verbo pasar tenga 54 significados, mientras en la República de Ecuador tienen 105 nombres para el órgano sexual masculino, y en cambio la palabra condoliente, que se explica por sí sola, y que tanta falta nos hace, aún no se ha inventado. A un joven periodista francés lo deslumbran los hallazgos poéticos que encuentra a cada paso en nuestra vida doméstica. Que un niño desvelado por el baido intermitente y triste de un cordero dijo: "Parece un faro". Que una vivandera de la Guajira colombiana rechazó un cocimiento de toronjil porque le supo a Viernes Santo. Que

don Sebastián de Covarrubias, en su diccionario memorable, nos dejó escrito de su puño y letra que el amarillo es "la color" de los enamorados. Cuántas veces no hemos probado nosotros mismos un café que sabe a ventana, un pan que sabe a ración, una cerveza que sabe a besos? Son pruebas al canto de la inteligencia de una lengua que desde hace tiempo no cabe en su pellejo. Pero nuestra contribución no debería ser la de meterla en cintura, sino al contrario, liberarla de sus fierros normativos para que entre en el siglo venturo como Pedro por su casa.

En ese sentido me atrevería a sugerir ante esta sabia audiencia que simplifiquemos la

Los idiomas se dispersan sueltos de madrina, se mezclan y confunden

gramática antes de que la gramática termine por simplificarlos a nosotros...

Jubilemos la ortografía, terror del ser humano desde la cuna: enterremos las hachas rupestres, firmemos un tratado de límites entre la g y jota, y pongamos más uso de razón en los acentos escritos... Y que de nuestra be de burro y nuestra ve de vaca, que los abuelos españoles nos trajeron como si fueran dos y siempre sobra una?

Son preguntas al azar, por supuesto, como botellas arrojadas a la mar con la esperanza de que le lleguen al dios de las palabras. A no ser que por estas cosas y desatinos, tanto el como todos nosotros terminemos por lamentar, con razón y derecho, que no me hubiera atropellado a tiempo aquella bicicleta providencial de mis 12 años.

Lands united by thriving legacy of conquistadors

Elizabeth Nash
Madrid

The diversity of Spanish in the world today probably owes its origins to rape and pillage, or the cross and the sword, or however you characterise the Conquista 500 years ago. Unlike the English and French, who wanted to rule their subjects and keep their distance, Spanish imperialism plunged into the midst of their own found land, destroying what they could and embracing what they couldn't.

Then, Spanish was the language of one country on southern Europe. Now it has become the primary tongue for 20 countries and, by the end of the century, an estimated 400 million people.

The king and queen of Spain, two Nobel laureates and hundreds of experts assembled in Zacatecas in Mexico this week for the First International Conference of the Spanish Language. If there was one conclusion reached on the first

day, it was that Spanish has a bright future. "We Spanish and Hispano-Americans are the owners and users of one of the four great languages of the near future, the others being English, Arabic and Chinese," said 1989 Nobel laureate Camilo José Cela of Spain.

The conquistadors created throughout Latin America something they called "criollismo": an indigenous society, shot through with ethnic and linguistic variations from Tierra del Fuego to the Rio Grande, that despite vast divergences spoke a common tongue: Spanish, or as they prefer it, Castellano.

The tag "Latin" (instead of "Hispanic") America was apparently imposed by the French after the Archduke Maximilian's ill-fated attempt to rule Mexico in 1870. But by then it was too late. The huge wealth of gold and silver had been dug up, shipped out and squandered, creating in the process a vibrant Spanish-speaking culture that produced

more Nobel literature prizewinners than the mother country. "We slept with many women but we married them too," was how one Spaniard summed up a process that differed fundamentally from the British in India and the French in Africa.

Shaw's dictum that Britain and the US were divided by a common language could never be applied to relations between Spain and Latin America. They understand each other all right, and acknowledge the bonds between them. But with the duration and depth of Spanish penetration, words survive in Latin American parlance that went out of use in Spain centuries ago.

Many words have come to have completely different meanings in different Spanish-speaking countries. Some are so suggestive that *El País*'s international edition has to monitor its headlines to avoid letting slip words like "coche" (shell) or "coger" (to catch or take) that are obscenities in Argentina.

But the Chilean word for a horse, "la polla", would be unprintable in a newspaper in Spain, where it means penis.

Much has been written recently about Spanglish, the patois of New Yorkers from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. It's the same in Gibraltar where you hear things like: "Yo quiero un tube of toothpaste pero el pink one." (I want a tube of toothpaste but the pink one.) For some reason, the verb - where the action is - tends to stay Spanish.

Unlike their French equivalents, Spanish academicians see their role less as guardian and custodian of a precious heritage, and more as recorder and catalogue of a common currency that has escaped their control. "The people always impose their language on the Academy in the long run," says Carlos Mendo, editor of *El País* Internacional. "In the end it has to cave in. It is flexible. After a few years they just incorporate the new words."

Six slits that sank 'Titanic' myth

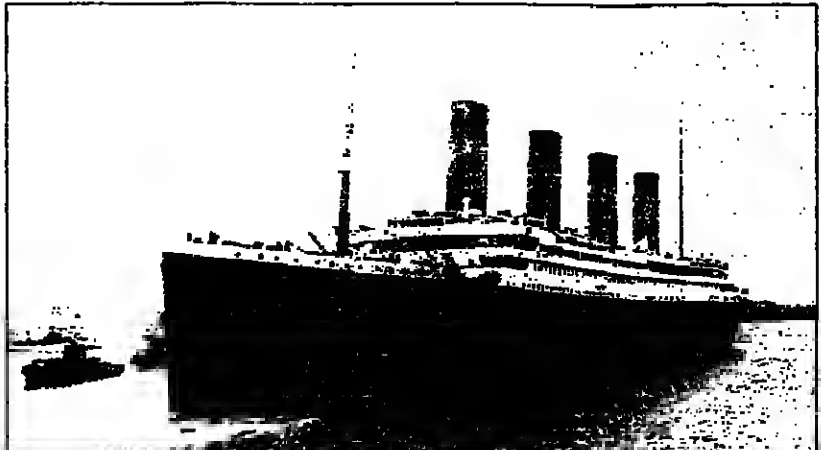
David Osborne
New York

A series of six short slits, each no wider than a human hand, was the only damage inflicted on the *Titanic* after it struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic in 1912 and not, as has always been thought, a gaping 300-foot gash.

The unexpected discovery emerged from an expedition to the luckless liner on the seabed by a team of scientists and engineers last August. From a submersible, the team carried out the first ultrasonic scan of the front end of the ship, much of which is buried in mud.

The finding will force a rewriting of the countless histories of the disaster that claimed 1,500 lives. It will also offer posthumous vindication to Edward Wilding, a naval architect with Harland & Wolff, who testified in 1912 that uneven flooding of airtight compartments argued against a single gash.

Such was the shock at the tragedy, that no explanation other than a cataclysmic tear in the hull's side seemed acceptable to the public, which had been conditioned to believe that the *Titanic* had been built to be unsinkable.



Built to be unsinkable: The *Titanic*, which went down in the North Atlantic in 1912

But according to this latest evidence, Mr Wilding was correct. The team found six slits, the longest of which was only 30 feet, affecting the front six of the ship's 16 sealed compartments. The total area of the openings was found to be only about 12 or 13 square feet.

"There is no gash," Paul Matthias, one of the ultrasound team told the *New York Times*. "What we're seeing is a series of deformations in the starboard side that start and stop along the hull."

Though small, the gaps would have been roughly 20 feet below the water line. The high pressure would have forced the ocean through the holes fast enough to flood the ship with about 39,000 tonnes of water before she holedly went down.

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Mister clean: A national parks worker steam-cleans the face of the Abraham Lincoln memorial, one of Washington DC's most popular tourist attractions. The statue is cleaned annually to counter the effects of pollution, birds and city grime. Photograph: Ron Thomas/Reuters

Gingrich risks right's ire to keep Speaker's post

Rupert Cornwell
Washington

With a slimmer waistline, a rousing speech to the conservative activists who once adored him and a virtually mandatory appearance on Larry King's television talk show, Newt Gingrich is making perhaps his final effort to avoid being tossed out as Speaker by his own Republican party.

In the three months since a formal reprimand and fine by Congress for ethics violations, Mr Gingrich's fortunes have slithered from bad to worse. His authority over his troops has faded, while the debate over his future has split the once-enthusiastic Republican majority and reduced the House of Representatives to near-paralysis.

One Republican Congressman has described him as "roadkill," and the conservative *Weekly Standard* magazine has written that his replacement is the only hope of saving the Republican "revolution" which he once embodied.

Another conservative commentator called the Speaker "a dead mouse on the kitchen floor of American politics".

But for the first time since his tenure by the House Ethics Committee in January, Mr Gingrich has been sounding like the self-proclaimed iconoclast who led his party to triumph of November 1994.

Admittedly, his audience on Monday evening - the GOPAC political action committee which he himself founded - could not have been friendlier. But the Speaker was back to his old self, preaching radical go-for-growth economics, lambasting unions and criticising the ethics failings of the Clinton administration as if his own did not exist. More of the same can be expected during Friday's Larry King appearance.

A lasting comeback, however, will be difficult. His foes this time are not Democrats, who would like nothing better than the survival of a discredited Gingrich, but his own nominal Republican supporters.

His own missteps have made matters worse. Most remarkable was his apparent forswearing of a tax cut in the interest of agreement with the White House on a balanced budget. The gesture was meant to shore up his support among moderate Republicans, but it enraged the conservatives.

"He's attempting to rehabilitate himself at the expense of the Republican party," Peter King, the New York Congressman responsible for the "roadkill" remark, said yesterday.

Fox Mr King and others who believe Mr Gingrich is betraying the revolution to save his own skin, every favourable reference to the Speaker in the "liberal media" like the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* adds insult to injury. Some Republicans muse openly of a secret ballot to dethrone him.

His one comfort is the lack of an obvious replacement. The most attractive candidate, the Budget Committee chairman John Kasich, looks more interested in running for president.

Starving N Koreans clutch at peace deal

Richard Lloyd Parry
Tokyo

Forty-four years after the Korean armistice, the government of North Korea appears to be on the verge of agreeing to historic peace talks, amid a worsening food crisis which has started to kill young children and to affect the armed forces.

North Korean officials have told their counterparts in Washington and Seoul that they will soon reply to a proposal for talks between the two Koreas, China and the United States, aimed at replacing the 1953 armistice with a permanent peace treaty.

The American Cable News Network (CNN) yesterday said North Korea would agree to the proposal and quoted a diplomat as saying Pyongyang acknowledges the "common necessity of beginning peace talks".

According to the United Nations World Food Programme, North Korean officials admit 134 children have died of malnutrition, the first official acknowledgement of deaths due to food shortages.

In Tokyo yesterday, an American congressman who recently returned from North Korea said he had seen soldiers of the Korean People's Army whose clothes did not fit them, apparently because of weight loss.

Tony Hall, a Democrat from Ohio, spent three days in the north-west of the country, a region seldom visited by foreigners. "You look at the soldiers and their uniforms don't fit," he said. "Everyone is systematically starving together."

In the past, South Korea has resisted calls for food aid, claiming humanitarian supplies may

be diverted to feed Pyongyang's 1 million-strong army.

In February, Washington and Seoul promised through the WFP \$10m (£5.8m) and \$6m of aid respectively. Yesterday, South Korean officials said this sum was "under review". Seoul insists large-scale humanitarian aid can only be discussed in the course of peace talks, but the last few days have seen a number of aid initiatives, some seemingly intended to lure Pyongyang to the negotiating table.

On Monday, the UN officially launched a new appeal for \$126m of food, agricultural supplies, and medicines. An American grain trader, Cargill Inc, also announced the sale to the North of 20,000 tons of grain, apparently in a barter exchange for 4,000 tons of zinc, two months after the US government granted an exception to its blanket ban on commerce with Pyongyang.

Last week, South Korea's Red Cross sent \$1m of food and seed, and a charity group in Seoul yesterday announced an appeal for \$21m more.

According to Congressman Hall, however, "what the world has promised and committed to as far as food aid goes is not enough, it's not even close."

During his four-day trip, he saw countryside denuded of trees, which had been cut down for firewood, freezing hospitals without any fuel oil and few drugs, and hungry people surviving on 100gm of rice a day.

"Almost every child that I saw had some kind of respiratory problem, and diarrhoea or dysentery, all of them related to diet and dirty water," he said. "North Korea needs help."

Albania forces Italy to brink

Andrew Gumbel
Rome

The Albanian crisis dealt another painful blow to the stability of the Italian government yesterday. Opposition parties saw a chance to bring down the Prime Minister, Romano Prodi, and threatened to sabotage a government motion on sending an Italian-led intervention force across the Adriatic.

Having started out as an opportunity for Italy to shine on the international stage, Albania is turning into a nightmare for Mr Prodi. First he lost the support of a crucial ally, the far-left party Rifondazione Comunista, thus losing his precarious majority in the Chamber of Deputies. Now he risks losing the opposition as well, which until yesterday had pledged to support the intervention force.

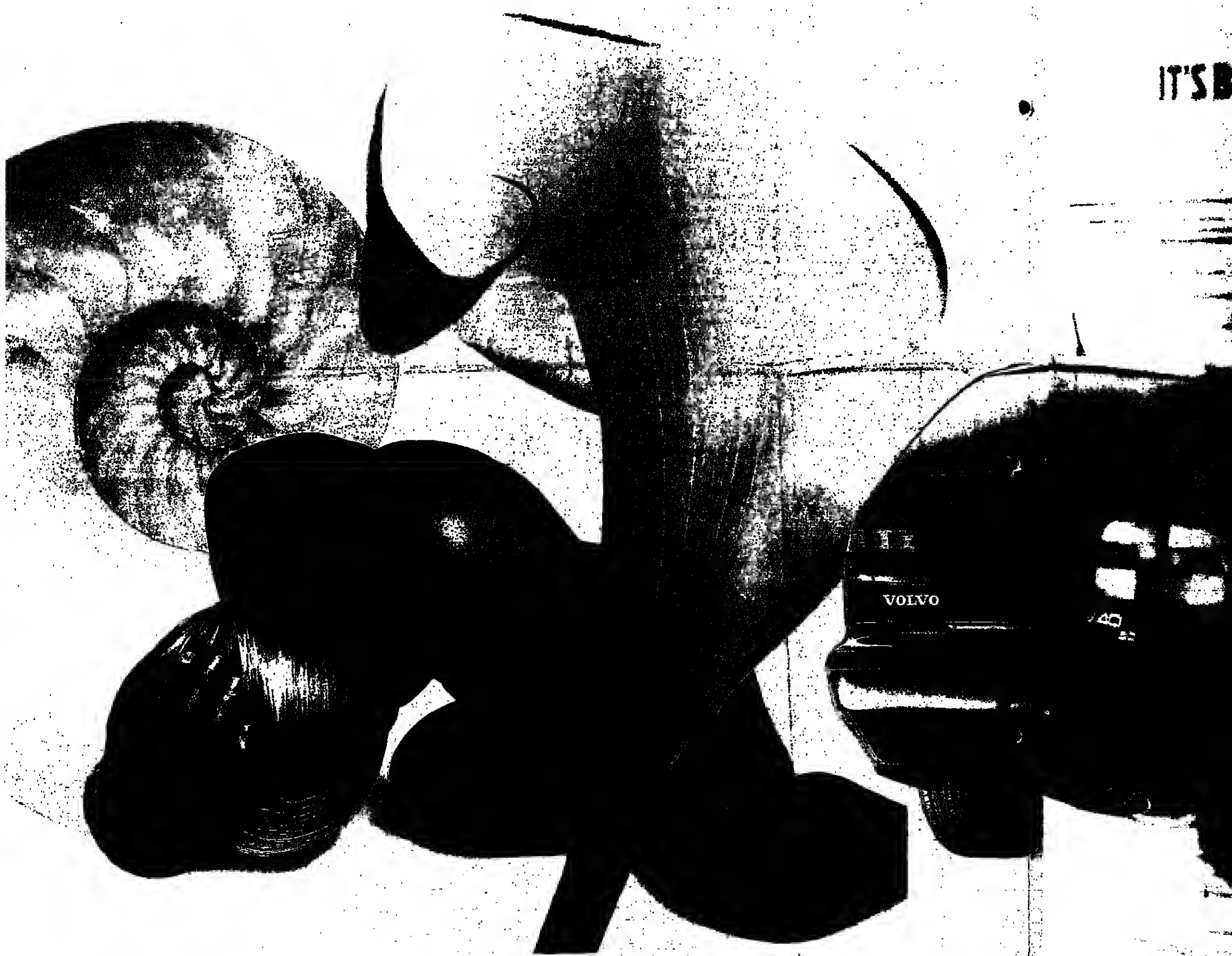
The leader of the opposition, Silvio Berlusconi, laid out a trap for Mr Prodi, announcing that his deputies would vote against the government motion but would present a similarly worded one of their own instead. The

Albanian mission is not itself at risk, therefore; the issue is one of political pride. Mr Berlusconi's challenge is as follows: if Mr Prodi wants an intervention force in Albania, he will have to vote for the opposition's motion rather than his own.

The scene is set for a showdown in parliament today, where Mr Prodi's government will have to struggle to survive. Its only hope, barring a change of heart by Mr Berlusconi, is to lure Rifondazione Comunista back into the fold.

Yesterday, the deputy foreign minister, Piero Fassino, tried to do just that by stating in outspoken fashion that the Italian government wants to see President Sali Berisha of Albania go.

Rifondazione, which has argued that the intervention force would only keep President Berisha in power, welcomed his remarks but said they did not go far enough. Mr Prodi, however, disowned his point of view, then Mr Fassino himself did the same, confirming an impression was of government in disarray and panic.



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Peace hopes die in Hebron cauldron

As Israel hardens its line, the Palestinians are responding in kind, writes **Patrick Cockburn**

Hebron - As he holds up the X-ray photograph of Nader Adel el-Saad's head in the Alia hospital in Hebron, Mousa Abu Maid points to the distinct round shape of a white object near the top of the spine, which is the rubber-coated steel bullet which lodged there after entering the eye.

"Will he survive?" asks Dr Abu Maid, director of hospitals on the West Bank. "It will be difficult. And if he does he will be paralysed. The bullet is lodged too close to the brain." Another Palestinian, his name still unknown, died from a rubber bullet in the eye a few hours earlier in the hospital.

Dr Abu Maid said a further 91 Palestinians were treated for lesser injuries in the riots which erupted in central Hebron yesterday. The trouble started when two Jews studying at a yeshiva (religious college) maintained by Israeli settlers in

Hebron shot dead Assam Rashid Arabeh, 23, in the vegetable market of the old city. They said he fired tear-gas or threw acid at them. Other Palestinians said the students asked Mr Arabeh why he was staring at them. Dissatisfied with his answer, one of them fired a single shot into his chest. As he was hurled into Hebron yesterday afternoon, mourners shouted: "Let the olive branch fall and the gun rise."

It was not a good day for the olive branch or any other symbol of peace. Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, returned from Washington after telling President Bill Clinton that construction at Har Homa, known to Arabs as Jabal Abu Ghneim, and other Jewish settlements will continue. "When I walk in Jerusalem I feel as though I am walking in the place where King David strolled," Mr Netanyahu told a

meeting of fundamentalist American Christians. "We will build in Jerusalem. It is our right. It is our obligation." He mocked journalists who talked about "Arab east Jerusalem" (in fact, all Israeli settlements on occupied territory, including east Jerusalem, are illegal under Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention).

In Hebron, casualty figures were rising all morning. Since January the city has been partitioned between 120,000 Palestinians and 400 Jewish settlers. At the bottom of Shalala street, where Nader Adel el-Saad was shot in the eye, teenagers stoned Israeli troops, who responded with rubber bullets and stun grenades. For once, perhaps because the wind was in the wrong direction, there was no tear-gas. On the Palestinian side of the dividing-line, Palestinian police with gas masks, but no other equipment, waved



Relatives and friends carry the coffin of Assam Rashid Arabeh, who was shot dead by a Jewish religious student yesterday. Photograph: Reuters

their hands ineffectually to persuade the rioters to pull back. They were met with volleys of stones. In an alleyway off Shalala street the rioters, who were

aggressive though not very numerous, stormed the line of Palestinian police, at least one of whom had a bandage on his head after an earlier attempt to

stop the stoning. Some of the shopkeepers optimistically tried to stay open as the fighting swirled around them. The owner of the Annasser restaurant,

peeping nervously over mounds of yellow rice and bubbling stews to see what was happening in the street, said: "This has been going on for 20 days now. The primary schools are all closed. My younger son is out throwing stones, but not the older one."

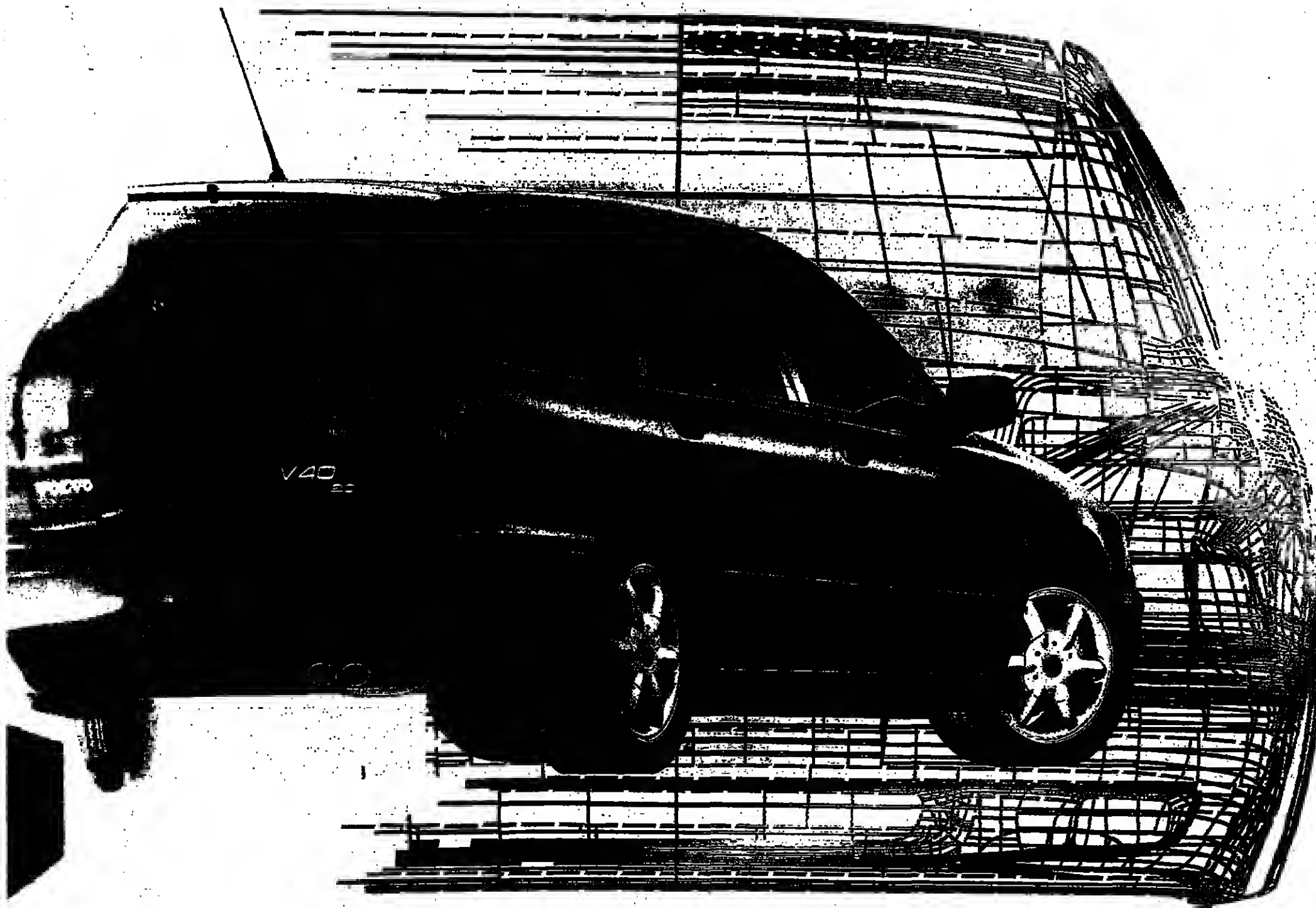
It may be that the Jewish settlers are being more aggressive because they sense that the Oslo accords of 1993, which they have always detested, are dissolving. On Monday a settler from Dolev settlement, near Ramallah, was arrested by Israeli police after opening fire and seriously wounding a Palestinian with his rifle. He said his car had been hit by stones.

The settlers are probably right about the fate of the peace accords.

Their basis was peace for Israel. But Mr Netanyahu made clear in Washington that he is not prepared to give up much land on the West Bank and none at all in Jerusalem.

He has also offered to scrap the present interim phase of the Oslo accords. Instead, he would discuss a final agreement with the Palestinians. The US and Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, are wary of this, seeing it as an attempt by Mr Netanyahu not to end the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, which was the objective of the interim agreement.

IT'S BUILT ALONG THE SAME LINES AS OUR BIG ESTATES.
BUT WITHOUT ALL THE STRAIGHT LINES.



VOLVO
V40

Call for peace fails to check Zaire's rebels

Reuters
Johannesburg

Zaire's warring sides said after peace talks in South Africa yesterday that they had agreed on the need for a ceasefire but gave no details of how this could be implemented.

Delegates representing President Mobutu Sese Seko and the rebel leader Laurent Kabila adjourned their negotiations four days after meeting for the first time in Pretoria.

"Both parties agreed on negotiations to bring about a peaceful, political solution to the conflict," a joint statement said.

"This necessitates a complete cessation of hostilities and other measures consistent with the implementation of the UN-OAU peace plan," said the statement. South Africa's Deputy President Thabo Mbeki, who convened the talks with Mohamed Sahnoun, representative of the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity, said Zaireans needed to consult their leaders.

Mr Kabila said yesterday that rebel "elements" had reached a town only 170 miles north-east of Kinshasa. "We are in Kasai Oriental. Elements have arrived in Bandundu and

Mbandaka." Mr Kabila said. Kasai Oriental is the eastern part of Kasai region with Mbuji-Mayi as its capital.

Soldiers in Zaire's collapsing army said they had driven back a rebel advance on the copper city of Lubumbashi, which was rocked by explosions overnight. "We have repulsed the enemy," said an officer from President Mobutu's Special Presidential guard (DSP), the only part of the army which seems ready to put up a fight. Lubumbashi, Zaire's second city, is the next declared target of the rebels.

In the capital, Kinshasa, defence ministry sources said the DSP had been sent to push back rebels from Kipushi, on the Zambian border, reported to have fallen to rebels earlier.

The DSP has more weapons and is better disciplined than the rest of Zaire's ragged army that has distinguished itself in looting during the civil war but has put up little resistance to the rebels. Its defined role is to protect Mr Mobutu and vital national interests.

The war has raised human rights concerns at the UN, which is also trying to organise an airlift for the tens of thousands of refugees who have been caught in the conflict.

significant shorts

British mercenary chief free to leave Papua

Tim Spicer, the Briton detained in Papua New Guinea for more than three weeks after an aborted mercenary operation, was told yesterday he was free to leave after illegal firearm charges against him were dropped.

Mr Spicer, 44, has completed giving evidence at an inquiry into his mission which saw the Papuan army rebel and force the Prime Minister, Sir Julius Chan, from office. The former Scots Guard had pleaded not guilty to illegally possessing a pistol and 40 rounds of ammunition, but the charges were dropped. Reuters - Port Moresby

East German farmers' debt

Germany's supreme court, trying to untangle the legal fallout from unification in 1990, ruled that east German farmers must repay about 10 billion marks (£3.5bn) of Communist-era debt. The cooperative farms say they could face ruin if forced to pay. Reuters - Karlsruhe

Reporters at risk in Nigeria

Journalists in Nigeria are the target of frequent attacks ordered by the government and have faced torture, unfair trials and arbitrary detention, a report by the British-based human rights group Article 19 said.

"Under General Abacha, Nigeria's media has been subjected to a level of harassment and intimidation unprecedented even by the standards of previous military governments," Article 19 executive director Frances D'Souza said. Reuters - London

FBI Olympic bomb errors

The US Justice Department has found that FBI agents who interviewed Richard Jewell, who was named as a suspect in last summer's Olympic Atlanta bombing, committed an error in judgement but were guilty of no criminal misconduct, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported. Reuters - Atlanta

مكتبة ابن الجوزي

A fire in the heavens, a moment of truth

Take yourself away from the election. It's hard, we know, but go on. Just for a moment. Walk outside on one of these delightfully clear spring evenings, and look up at the sky. Maybe you have already done it: stepped into the garden, taken a midnight walk up the hill at the end of the road, and seen Hale-Bopp ride high in the heavens.

The chances are that you felt a range of emotions on witnessing that faintly eerie sight of a hugely inflated "star" apparently trailing its light across the sky. Obviously our feelings vary, from a kind of childlike amazement, to reflections on the timespan between now and the last time this phenomenon was seen (and the next time, indeed).

It is a fair guess that these sights continue to dazzle the minds even of members of the National Astronomical Society, meeting in Southampton yesterday. Somewhere inside, our response is primal. Like ancient civilisations before us, we suspect that an understanding of the movements of the heavens might lead to a better understanding of ourselves. Perhaps we might even answer all those great questions (life, the universe, and everything) that Douglas Adams concluded all come down to the figure 42.

Popular interest in and enthusiasm for astronomical revelation is boom-

ing. In Britain, a fascination with astral bodies has long been the rage, probably because our maritime demands forced us into tracking space like few other nations. More recently, our interest has been stimulated by having one of our leading mathematicians, Stephen Hawking, write a book that sat at the top of the bestseller lists for terrestrial aeons – a book that started to explain to lay people how the universe might have begun, and what time and space might really be. That, however, is by no means all. For the Hawking revival of interest in the origins of the universe could not have taken root without a general worldwide acceleration in understanding and knowledge of the remote cosmos.

Once, arguably, there was only one great question: how to understand the mind of God. Since the middle of the 19th century, the dominant role of religion has been steadily eroded, so that the old question is now framed in different ways. How did life come to be at all, and what is it for? That is the evolutionary question. Then there is the question about the human mind. Freud and his followers kicked it off, but were more wrong in detail than right; it is now clear that we have only very lightly scratched the surface of answers to the mysteries of our own brains. And then there is the ques-

tion of how and why the universe exists.

The old, sad view of science used to be that it stole wonder from the world; by answering those questions, so people thought, we diminished the mysteries of the universe. But it turns out that the reverse is true. The more we learn, the greater our wonder; the greater our wonder, the greater our appetite to learn more.

Two of the biggest "events" last year were not conventional events at all. The first was the publication by Nasa of pictures from the Hubble telescope of the farthest reaches of

the universe (in effect, light that left its source shortly after the "big bang"). The second was the proclamation that evidence had been found in a meteorite that rudimentary life might have existed on Mars.

Of these, the greatest revelation was the first. If there were life on Mars, it would be astonishing and marvellous. But it is also exciting because it stimulates fantasies about extraterrestrial life.

Wonder is not the same as fantasy. Wonder is best engendered by transcendent truths, not fantastical speculations. So when we see the

truth of what the universe looked like 15 billion years ago, we truly wonder, in the sense that we are awestruck. The feeling is closer to reverence than to fascination. Is it any surprise, in that context, that so many prominent scientists also succeed in maintaining religious faith?

Keats knew the intimate equation of truth and beauty. As a medical student, he would have been well aware that reality is far more wonderful than dreams. The enormously abstruse calculations disclosed in Southampton yesterday – calculations that enable us to begin measuring the location of dark matter – have a kind of beauty that even those without mathematical skills ought to be able to comprehend. So, too, those observations that enabled astronomers yesterday to discuss the origins of galaxies. Why? Because they lead us to a new way of seeing the world. Put another way, they enable us to marvel.

None of this can be measured in terms of consumption: how much astronomy do we need, what should we spend on it, what is its "value". These are not entirely sensible questions (though someone, in another place and another time, is obliged to answer them). The real point is this. To the extent that our searches in the heavens are about stimulating fantasy (which is merely a way of peering into

our own insecurities), then they are relatively meaningless, although entertaining. To the extent that they seek out another layer of that thing we are pleased to call truth, they will resonate deeply in all of us.

The more popular and better understood this science of astronomy becomes, the better we can feel about ourselves. For the stars are a fine place to find a proper sense of awe.

The night we saw Blair wriggle

Curious, for those who watched David Dimbleby's interview with Tony Blair on Monday night, to see the normally hithe Labour leader crumble so easily under the pressure of continuous, contemptuous interruption. Mr Dimbleby prepared himself well, and departed himself even better: for the first time in this campaign, viewers saw someone put the heat on Mr Blair, and watch him wriggle. He coped rather badly – in a way that, in an American election campaign, would have set him back a few notches. No doubt Mr Blair will learn how to handle intelligently hostile questioning; but it's almost heartening to know that he has not yet mastered all the arts of media manipulation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Growth will not pay for Labour's plan

Sir: The Labour manifesto notes that education spending as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has fallen under the Conservatives and states that, over the course of a five-year parliament, the proportion of GDP spent on education will rise. Labour's policy is thus to ensure that, by the final year of a Labour government's first term of office (2001-2), a higher proportion of GDP will be spent on education than was the case in the Conservative government's final year in office (1996-7).

Many will applaud this commitment. However, it is worth examining it in the light of the public finance projections for the years to 2001-2, as set out in the November 1996 Budget Red Book. These suggest that Labour's commitment can only be achieved by increasing taxes, increasing borrowing or cutting other core areas of spending (such as defence or the NHS), as compared to current projections.

In 1996-7 public sector education spending amounted to around £5.5bn (4.7 per cent of GDP), whilst total Government Expenditure (GE) amounted to £11.3 per cent of GDP. The Red Book projections for the years to 2001-2 forecast that GE as a proportion of GDP will fall to 10.5 per cent by 2001-2.

The Red Book projections make some demanding assumptions regarding future growth in real GDP. GDP is assumed to grow on average by an above trend 2.8 per cent per annum in the five-year period from now until 2001-2.

Moreover, the projections assume that, by 2002, the economy will have grown at a rate of 2 per cent per annum or more during each of the nine years 1997-4 to 2001-2. Treasury figures for UK GDP growth, from 1985 onwards, show that the UK economy has never grown by 2 per cent or more in each of nine consecutive years. The high GDP growth rate assumptions used in the Red Book projections must enable the assumed cost of social security to be cut rapidly.

The Red Book projections all the way out to 2001-2 do not analyse GE between its constituent parts. However, it can be realistically assumed that spending on education is projected to fall as a proportion of GDP broadly in line with the rate at which GE falls as a proportion of GDP on this basis. Then by 2001-2 spending on education would be some 1.4bn per annum lower than if it had been held at the same proportion of GDP as it was in 1996-7.

Labour wishes to honour its manifesto commitment by increasing education spending as a proportion of GDP by even a modest 0.5 per cent of GDP (ie from 4.7 per cent in 1997-98 to 4.9 per cent in 2001-2), this would imply an education spend in 2001-2 some 1.9bn per annum higher than projected. This is equivalent to raising the rate of contribution to the National Insurance contributions from 10 per cent currently to around 12.5 per cent.

It is virtually inconceivable that this extra £6bn could come from economic growth and consequent reduced social security spending. The current projections already make some heroic assumptions in terms of high GDP growth rates. M C FITZPATRICK
Head of Economics
Charities Without
London WC1



Sir: Old Labour is "gone, all gone," you say (leading article, 4 April). Really? Many Old Labour people are still there – keeping quiet, perhaps, while Tony Blair gets the party elected, but they are there.

The Labour manifesto seems to be very much a personal creation of Mr Blair himself. Party leaders can be overthrown; when Tony Blair has been removed, what will become of the manifesto?

We know that we can't trust the Tories, but we don't know that we can trust Labour.
JOHN STANNING
Witchester

Sir: Swamp's call "Don't vote, act" (Letters, 2 April) just incensed me, as does the proud boast by some members of the Referendum Party that this will be the first time in some cases in 40 years that they will vote.

These, and other non-voters, bear much responsibility for the mess we are now in. Had they bothered to take an interest in what was going on and used their vote after making an informed decision, their collective voices would have been loud enough to be heard.

They did nothing; sat back and let self-servers take over. When things began to go wrong they conspired themselves – it wasn't their fault as they hadn't voted the Government in. So again they did nothing.

Some get carried away with the excitement of such campaigns as "Can't pay, Won't pay" (which resulted in the disenfranchising of thousands); Swamp in his turn: the Referendum Party and other single-issue candidates, while those in power will be happy that there are so many wasting their votes – thus allowing those who have risen

Lib Dems lack green vision

Sir: The Lib Dem manifesto may be the "greenest" ever produced by any major party in Britain" (Trevor Brown, letter, 7 April) but it still lacks crucial elements of a truly green vision.

There are no specific targets to reduce traffic levels or to boost recycling and reuse. There are no specific targets to cut many forms of waste and pollution. There is no commitment to introduce

environmental rights for all citizens or to review the roads programme. It is worth pointing out that "Don Foster's" Road Traffic Reduction Bill was actually drafted by the Green Party and Friends of the Earth, not the Lib Dems.

Perhaps most importantly, in their obsession with economic growth based on quantity not quality, none of the main parties has set the target of a 50-60 per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions urgently required to stabilise global warming.

If you want to join a green party, join the Green Party!
Dr DAVID CROMWELL
Southampton Green Party
Southampton

Overwhelmed by calls for charity

Sir: As company secretary of a London-based company, I am inundated with phone calls from charitable organisations, to the extent that the daily work routine is seriously affected. Presumably, small charities are now having to fight for any non-lottery money available, but do they have to act like packs of hunting dogs?

Phoning companies up is onw, it seems, a fine art. The phone rings and our receptionist announces the name of someone not recognised and not quoting a company reference. The call is taken and a jolly person at the other end, (usually with a Yorkshire/Lancashire accent) says hello and asks if you are all right.

Preliminaries over, you are informed that they represent such and such a charity and that they don't want any money now, but "could they count on your support" in the compilation of a programme of some sort in which your firm will get a mention as a contributor.

All the charities are for good causes, but once you have said yes to one, you are overwhelmed with calls from others. I have now had to explain to all callers that due to this badgering we can no longer donate to anyone, which is a pity and a great loss for charities in general.

I cannot understand why all callers use exactly the same technique. Is there a central training ground for charity workers, which is based on the individual

having a Northern accent (I have one myself), inquiring after your health, not wanting money and being very grateful?
DAVID ROBINSON
Sutton, Surrey

Choice numbers

Sir: So, Peter Todd has told the British Psychological Society that the best strategy for finding a life partner is to examine a dozen, and then make a choice from those who come along later (report, 5 April).

Plus ça change! For 30 years, undergraduate students studying dynamic programming, a branch of operational research, have looked at this problem as a light-hearted example of an important mathematical approach to making one decision after another. In various guises it has appeared in many examination papers, along with the problem of choosing the best pub for lunch (try two or three depending on how far apart they are) and how to adopt a winning strategy at darts (which requires an honest assessment of how accurately you throw).

The same mathematics is in daily use for obtaining attractive layout of print in computerised typesetting around the world. This branch of mathematics does not tell us what to do if the potential life partner is adopting the same strategy and you are only number eight on his or her list. You will be rejected, automatically!
Dr DAVID K SMITH
University of Exeter

Beast of Bont is a wild cat

Sir: Your article on the Beast of Bont (report, 4 April) overlooks the possibility that the beast may be a wildcat. This creature, known wrongly as the Scottish wildcat, was until the last century widespread over Britain. It was later presumed extinct south of the Highlands.

If a small population survived unbeknown to us this could well explain the beast sightings on Exmoor etc. It is noteworthy that the tail of the cat on the picture (4 April) is the tail of a wildcat, which differs from the tail of a domestic cat in that its end is rounded rather than tapering. It is also noteworthy that wildcat looms can reach three feet from head to tip of tail, which might explain why some of these beasts may have been confused with pumas.
FRANCIS BESWICK
Sneford

A proper lady

Sir: The word "lady" (Letters, 7 April) – for all who care to look it up – means bread-maker.

A lady has no helplessness, dependency or fragility at all – ask any baker.

Of course today's self-obsessed young women do not want to be called that. They think bread comes sliced in a waxed wrapper. It is they who need to be treated very gently. A proper lady gets on with her work, whatever it is. All this hickering about the intellectual difference between the sexes merely reflects badly on those who insist on it.
RAMELA DONOHUE
Sheffield

Learning about life

Sir: How brave of Elizabeth Kaye at age 35 to write about the ageing process ("Memoirs of a half-finished life", 4 April).

She is really only on the doorstep. Ageism may be more apparent to her now because of the things she doesn't feel part of: ageing itself is about what one has to let go of because it is no longer part of you: family involvement; physical restrictions. Growing is a process of growth. Growing into the person of full stature through wisdom, a wisdom acquired through enduring pain and separation, recognising that life itself is about loss and "knowing thyself".
BARBARA J RATCLIFFE
London W24

Mound of death

Sir: So the Grand National has been run and I am glad that we have cooked a snook at the IRA. But my abiding impression is of Smith's Band lying at the base of a fence, a still brown mound as the other horses thundered on. With the death of this horse and also that of Straight Talk surely a review of the danger of this race is overdue.
JOHN R BAKER
Norfolk

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analysis

If anyone can rescue the Conservatives from electoral doom, Ken Clarke is the man. Donald Macintyre shares a helicopter with one of the few politicians who might yet make a difference

Ken Clarke loves everything about elections, not least the bird's-eye view of the land below that you get in brilliant spring sunshine from a small low-flying aircraft. "You know why helicopters have to fly down the river," he says. "In case they fall out of the sky." The Chancellor guffaws loudly in a perfect imitation of Rory Bremner imitating him while his young Tory minder, Justin Powell-Tuck, smiles a shade nervously. Nobody, including the Chancellor himself, seems to know who has provided our helicopter. But, during the flight, Clarke delights in pointing out the London landmarks: the round courtyard in the Treasury, the new development at the Royals, Canary Wharf, seemingly only a few feet below us, the muddy Greenwich millennium site, the creeks meandering through the flatlands of south Essex.

And what a way to see England for this quintessentially English politician. We begin in Basildon, the rough, tough ultra-marginal which was too hot for the sitting MP David Amess to stay in, and where there seem to be more studs per male car than in any other town in Britain. We end the day, unexpectedly, at Cambridge, in the kitchen of the Master's lodgings at Gonville and Calus, where a butler in black jacket, grey pin-stripe trousers and white gloves pours china tea and hands round exquisitely cut, smoked salmon sandwiches and where the new Master, Neil McKendrick, tells us something Clarke's two biographers have missed. McKendrick was a 22-year-old history don when Clarke sat the scholarship. McKendrick recommended him for a scholarship and wanted him to do history. He got an exhibition and read law. But recently the Master looked up what he said of the future Chancellor in his report: "A clear robust mind. But lacks subtlety."

Six hours earlier Clarke had bounded into Basildon, uncharacteristically immaculate in light, double-breasted suit and suede brogues. He is full of glee at what he will describe repeatedly today as Labour's "overnight conversion to privatisation". He believes, not unreasonably, that he has got a dramatic result by exposing the "£1.2bn hole" in Labour's spending plans. For several days he has been pressing Labour to explain how, if they are intending to stick to his own spending plans, they will manage to do so without the Government's planned privatisation receipts or using frozen local authority proceeds to reduce the borrowing total. And he has drawn some blood. In a shift which Gordon Brown might have been planning for months, but which has been allowed to look suspiciously like simple flank-covering, Labour now turns out to



Can he bring back Tory smiles?

be contemplating privatisation of its own: Channel 4, the Met Office and Air Traffic Control, the planned sale of which was described only months earlier by senior Labour spokesmen as "crazy". So Clarke, confronted by the press pack outside the Argos warehouse, warms to his theme that Labour's economic policy is in the hands of "unprincipled scoundrels".

The warehouse itself, enormous (386,000 sq ft) and clean, neatly symbolises the economic debate, and its frustrations for Clarke's party, at the heart of this election. On the one hand it reflects precisely the brimming business confidence of a rapidly expanding service industry. It is the latest of four such centres and an identical one is being built just outside Manchester. What better evidence of a thriving consumer economy? On the other hand, the Argos warehouse has little to fear from a Labour government adopting the Social Chapter, a national minimum wage or a 48-hour week. Its 300 employees work an average 37.5 hour week and earn £6.45 per hour. There are share options and a Save as You Earn scheme. Turnover is low and the staff share generous benefits, including pensions. Even the part-time workers have pension rights.

The warehouse isn't unionised. Not because the company is anti-union - its other four plants are all unionised - but because there is little interest. A union recruitment meeting attracted only 30 people and John Hampson, Argos's dis-

tribution director, is confident that a recognition ballot would be decisively lost. The workers greet Clarke politely, but are somehow disengaged from the electoral purpose of the visit.

With the voters themselves, Clarke is, for all his cheery belligerence, a respectfully old-fashioned, soft-sell politician. He knows from long experience how, on seeing a minister looming on the horizon, voters "will dive into the greengrocers to be safe"; or an employee "will suddenly start to look terribly industrious". He therefore tries to "create a generally favourable impression" by taking a friendly interest in the electors themselves, introduces them to the candidate (and despite meeting five for the first time and having a self-confessed awful memory for names, he doesn't slip up once). And he doesn't proselytise much. He admits to being especially careful about what he says with reporters present. There is always the danger that you will accidentally "say something consequential which will make a great news story of an issue you had not exactly intended to feature that day". Hadn't that been how in 1987 Neil Kinnock was skewered by a voter from Penze, into saying that he would "take to the hills and fight as a guerrilla" against a Soviet attack?

But under attack, Clarke will argue back. He is delighted at the support from street traders in Norwich market. But there is an almost Monty Python knockabout with Catherine Lawrie, a Labour Party member, who stalks him through the market and attacks him on tax. "Are you trying to get me into an argument, Mr Clarke? I don't have to play the game, you know." "You haven't the first idea what Gordon Brown would do if he got in and nor has he," replies the Chancellor. And to a woman who shouts at him in Ipswich town centre that "you and your lot have wrecked the country", he exclaims back: "My recollection is that when we came into office half the country was on strike against the other half." Relaxing afterwards in the pub over a pint and a cheese sandwich, he plays shamelessly up to his image. Affecting dismay at the prospect of leaving the pub, he declares: "I like it here."

But he has the true pro's touch: as the day wears on, he knows he is starting gradually to lose out in the battle for the airwaves to "the white-suited war correspondent" (as he at one

point describes the new Tatoo candidate Martin Bell). But he will stick determinedly to his theme throughout the day. And rightly so, for for the first time you have the impression that Clarke is fighting the election campaign that would make a difference if only his party wasn't engulfed by Tatoo. You suspect that he would like to see Mr Hamilton replaced without delay, but he is scrupulous in never saying so. Instead, to the microphones thrust in front of him at the end of the day by reporters in Cambridge, he says, without once losing his amiability: "Are people going to cast votes on the Government for the next five years on the basis on whether Neil Hamilton should continue to be the candidate for Tatoo? They're not in any part of the world and I hope they're not in Cambridge."

Earlier, he has turned down flat a suggestion that he should debate with Gordon Brown on the *World at One*. He is delighted to do it, but not from an Ipswich studio in which Brown would have the huge advantage of being physically with the presenter. And, as we speed through Norwich in a Jaguar driven by the Peter Martin, the eastern area Tory chairman, he claims to be a little concerned that, in a BBC local radio interview, he may have been a little "laid back" in suggesting that Great Yarmouth didn't necessarily need European transport cash.

But confronted unexpectedly by another radio reporter, who asks what he feels about "the new Steven Spielberg film being lost by Norfolk to the Republic of Ireland" he plays the straightest of hats. He would need to know the details before commenting, he says. And anyway Britain's film industry has never been doing better. And when Arnold Reeve, a shop assistant in Matthews' electrical store appears a little hesitant about the pace at which business is picking up, he takes it as welcome evidence "that the recovery will be sustainable. Cheerio."

Which helps to sum up his attitude to the economy, the one issue on which he genuinely believes the Government deserves to win a fifth election. He doesn't use the word "boom" once; he uses "sustainable recovery" all the time. He won't talk about it, but it's an open secret in Westminster that "Britain is booming" wasn't his own choice of slogan, though in the brief period available after the admen had thought of it, no one came up with a better one. And he isn't a "load-samoney" politician. He emphasises continually

the importance of income tax cuts to the wider economy and the need to spread the benefits of recovery to those who haven't yet tasted them.

But tomorrow he meets Eddie George, the Governor of the Bank of England, for the monthly monetary meeting - in Nottingham for the first time. In anticipation of a post-election interest-rate rise, the pound has soared to its highest level since 1992. George is virtually certain to press for a modest rise before polling day.

Isn't it true, I ask, that whatever the economic case, such a rise would be politically impossible, perhaps even suicidal. No it wouldn't, insists Clarke, suddenly becoming the Chancellor rather than electioneer, on the road from Norwich to Cambridge. It's a "difficult economic dilemma". And all the factors will have to be weighed, but, says Clarke: "I've never had any difficulty explaining, when we've put rates up or taken them down, what we're doing it for. So I don't think it is the political no-no that everyone keeps assuming me to be."

For once we've scarcely talked about Europe at all. So what are the risks that, if the Tories enter the closing days of the campaign still trailing in the polls, the potential leadership contest by trailing their Euro-sceptic colours?

"I don't think that will happen," says Clarke. "There are sections of the Conservative press who will encourage people to do that but it isn't at the moment producing any response. I think the Conservative Party has settled a policy and knows how to fight an election on the basis of a programme for government."

Is it, I ask, a safe assumption that if he loses he'll stay in politics. "Oh yeah, a very safe assumption." And stand as leader? This he won't discuss. "It is positively damaging," he warns, if people start turning their mind to anything other than victory.

Who knows what the Chancellor, for all his confident demeanour, thinks deep down about the outcome of the election. He hasn't yet started to campaign in earnest among his own people in Nottinghamshire, where it is easiest to compare opinion with previous elections. All you know is that, amid all the distractions and the noises, he is going to try like hell. And, if anyone could make a difference, he could.

In confident form: the Chancellor meets the voters in East Anglia, with your correspondent looking over his shoulder. Photograph: Tom Pison

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Why the election is not about fox-hunting

I wasn't going to talk about politics, but I met a man on the train the other night who finally explained to me what the election was all about, and I'd like to pass it on.

"What you have got to remember," he said, "is that this election is not about politics."

"Hold on a second," I said. "What is it about, then?"

"In this country," he said, "we confuse two quite different things: politics, and party politics. Politics is all about inequality, and oppression, and social purpose, and employment and privilege. Party politics is all about polls and votes of confidence and sleaze and marginal seats and Westminster whippers and Cabinet reshuffles, and all the things they love on Radio 4's *Today* programme. We are often told that the much-vaulted *Today* programme has too much politics on it. On the contrary, it has no politics at all. What it has is too much party politics, as when Michael Howard has to confront Jack Straw...

The man shuddered.

"So, the election is about party politics?"

"No. There is one other thing you have to remember. The election may appear to be about party politics, but we British always appear to be talking about one thing when really it is all about another."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, take a strike, for instance. A rail strike, which may ostensibly be about pay structure or rostering, is often really about fury with inefficient management. Or take fox-hunting. The battle over fox-hunting is not about cruelty to foxes - none of the people involved really gives a toss about that. It is another town vs country battle, or us vs them, or an outcrop of the class struggle."

"However, hunt saboteurs cannot turn up waving banners saying: 'We Hate These Fat Upper-Middle-Class Port-Faced Gents On Their Big Upper-Middle-Class Fat-Arsed Horses'. So they make out that it is all about cruelty to foxes. Of course, if they really cared about cruelty to animals they would be picketing a battery



Miles Kingston

chicken farm, or an intensive pig farm, where far worse things happen than on fox hunts. In the same way, the election isn't about politics or party politics, even though we all pretend it is.

"So what is it all about?" I asked tensely, glancing at my watch. Another hour to go to my station. Would have he got to the point by then?

"It's about management style. Basically, what Blair is asking us for is a chance to move in and get paid to run the country for the next five years, and he wants to

persuade us that he can do it efficiently, profitably and constructively, and more so than the last incumbent. The general election is just a job interview writ large. We, the electorate, are interviewing Blair and Major for the job of running us."

"That's not how it comes across."

"Of course not. It is not allowed to. The party leaders have to pretend it is really a debate about education, health and law and order..."

"Which is also..."

"Possibly. As they largely agree on most of those things, the so-called debate rings a little false to me. No, what this is all about is a job interview to run the country, and it should be judged on merit and potential."

"In that case," I said, "Kenneth Clarke at least should be left in charge, even if the rest are chucked out. He seems to be doing a good job."

"Spot on," said the man. "And most of the Labour Party would agree. Unfortunately, if Blair gets the job, everyone has to go no matter how good or bad."

Nobody will be sorry to see the end of Michael Howard. Everyone will regret the exit of Kenneth Clarke. But it is one of the vagaries of our political system that if the Premiership changes sides, every post has to be vacated and changed. It is almost as if, whenever a club football manager was sacked and a new manager appointed, all the old players were chucked out and a whole new team drafted in.

There was a depressed silence.

"What we need is a completely new system," he said. "The system we have at the moment was devised just to help select a local representative. We are using it to choose a national government. So of course it doesn't work. It is yet another example of us doing one thing while pretending to do another. What we need is a system which will give us the best national management team, and the only way to do that is..."

I must have fallen asleep there. When I awoke, he had gone. So had my station, but that is another story.

تمت من الأصل

Clerical nostalgia won't solve unemployment

If you are surprised by the way the policies of the two major parties here have converged, look around the world and see a much wider convergence than anything that has happened here. All countries – well, virtually all – vie with each other to extend the market system to the remaining state-run parts of their economies.

So when, as he did this week, Tony Blair suggests that the privatisation programme will continue under a Labour government, all he is doing is putting into practice the same policy as, say, Ecuador, which is currently privatising its hydroelectric power utility.

Take another policy issue which, thanks to the Council of Churches, has come to the forefront this week – what governments might do about unemployment – and look around the world. Exactly the same agonising is taking place in, say, Morocco as in Germany and France: how to hold the budget deficit at 3 per cent of GDP in the face of very high unemployment. To read the view of our clerics you might imagine that this is entirely a British problem, whereas actually it is a universal one.

So what will differentiate policies in the future? What will differentiate countries?

What is the nature of comparative advantage in a world where everyone is operating the same economic system? Is it just a question of competence: who can run market capitalism best?

Of course, competence is essential, but I think that comparative advantage will require something more. And we are just beginning to see the outlines of what that might be. You can see it in some of the recent books emerging on both sides of the Atlantic. Thus, in America, Jeffrey Garten, dean of the Yale School of Management, argues in his new book on the emerging markets, *The Big Ten*, that one should differentiate between the "hardware" of market capitalism and the "software". The hardware is establishing securities markets, privatising public functions and so on. The software is establishing the ethical and legal framework within which these activities function. The hardware is the easy part – for example, everyone knows how to privatise – so the competition is in the software: issues like regulation, ethics and so on.

Here, some of those issues have been explored by Professor Richard Layard, of the London School of Economics. In his recent book *What Labour Can Do*, this is a political book – it carries an endorsement from Gordon Brown on the cover – but it is helpful in setting out some of those areas of "software" competition. Among the things he identifies as priorities for government attention are basic educational skills, long-term unemployment, competition policy and corporate governance, and fiscal and monetary stability.

But running an efficient market economy goes far beyond the confines of what an elected government can do. Another – less political – way of looking at this new form of competition is to ask what are the broader features that make a market economy work well.

Assume that fiscal and monetary policies are conducted sensibly. Assume that the government is competent at handling its own finances, that it raises money in a non-distorting way and spends it wisely. (You may think these are



Hamish McRae

We are in a new game, which everyone is operating: market capitalism. Some will operate it better: more ethically, more efficiently

heroic assumptions, but one of the effects of globalisation is that had governments are disciplined swiftly and brutally by the financial markets.) What else, then, is needed? I suggest that a successful market economy has at least three additional requirements.

One is a financial system which is able to allocate savings efficiently. Money will flow anywhere in the world where there are investment opportunities. But you need rules to make sure that markets give the right signals to investors. If you distort the markets, you get lousy investments. You can see this most clearly in Japan, where financial markets were rigged through the 1980s, and where massive errors of investment were made, for example over-investment in property. Those errors have piled up bad debts in the banking system which have inhibited the ability of banks to lend on new and more worthwhile projects, and hence made it very difficult for the Japanese economy to recover from recession. That is now appreciated in Japan, which is bringing forward financial market reforms on the lines of London's Big Bang of 1986.

A second area of competition is in legal affairs. Obviously the market system cannot operate efficiently until there is basic order in the streets, and property rights are established and enforceable. Russia is now discovering the costs of disorder, and Hong Kong businesses may discover that they have lost an advantage when the British-established legal

system no longer provides an umbrella for their activities. But this is not just an issue for new converts to market capitalism. The US may well be at a comparative disadvantage because of an excessively expensive and cumbersome legal system. A lot of international business is carried out under UK law because, for all its faults, it is cheaper to operate under than US.

A third area of competition is regulation. The mood of the 1980s and 1990s has largely been one of deregulation. You can see that happening now in telecommunications, or just this week, in European air fares. But while many countries have successfully obtained an advantage by removing damaging regulations, it may well be that the next 20 years will see countries seeking to gain an advantage by clever re-regulation. That will not necessarily be done by government. Indeed national governments may be the wrong type of bodies to regulate efficiently in a global environment. The big trend may be towards light but effective self-regulation imposed by professional organisations or multinational corporations, who see that it is in their commercial self-interest to provide a stable and ethical framework. That is exactly what happened in the last quarter of the last century, a period which saw a similar process of globalisation as the present.

There is no hiding place. We are in a new game, a new open system which everyone is operating: market capitalism. But some of us will operate the system better than others – more ethically, more efficiently. Apply that test to political statements whether they come from professional politicians or from the Council of Churches. Might these ideas enable the market system to operate better? Or do they look backwards, with nostalgia, to a half-remembered past?

The men who took the heart out of social work

by Joyce Brand



After 25 years I have been driven from my career by MBAs whose priority is management systems, not providing a service

company of colleagues who were decent and humane and who gave unstintingly to the families with whom they worked. The vilification of social work by the tabloid press caused me no sleepless nights. I wanted to praise from the hang-and-dog-em brigade who saw poverty as justice for the so-called feckless. And then I trusted that our managers shared our value system.

In these workers is lodged the true decency of a welfare service, but underpinning them has to be an organisation that supports its workers. The first director of social services I knew was a Quaker, a pacifist and a leading childcare professional. That department's value system was rooted in humanity and professionalism; that social services committee's stated aim was to provide a welfare service of excellence to the residents of their county.

What of today? What is it that has driven out those 80 workers and me? I cannot ignore the concerted Tory effort to destroy both local government and those professions that might impede the relentless march of the market, with its heartless disregard for those in poverty, those with disabilities and those

elderly people upon whose earlier efforts our society was built. But it is from within the organisation that the greatest threat comes. We now have MBA managers so preoccupied with systems, recording and checking, that they have stopped valuing their most precious resource: their staff. A refreshing management thinker, Henry Mintzberg, has described MBA courses as attracting neither creative nor generous people and eventually producing the trivial strategist rather than the visionary who empowers workers.

These managers have devised sophisticated and time-consuming assessment procedures which ensure that only a minority of the truly deserving public will be given a service. They have set up procedures and instructions that are eroding the enthusiasm and generosity of social workers. They are busy enabling social workers to feel no pain, while they translate human distress into recordable statistics rather than having time to be of any real use to families who need help. I find it hard to hear that social work has moved to the point that – like health service workers who don't notice a patient is becoming malnour-

ished because he cannot manage to feed himself, or social security staff who now believe it is acceptable for 16- and 17-year-olds to be left financially unsupported – we are encouraged to ask whether the elderly disabled woman has antiques that could be sold by her family to provide for her care. We are required to respond to a request for support for a young mother suffering post-natal distress with the reply: "This is not one of our priorities."

In trying to make sense of this state of affairs, I am left with an explanation that is relevant not only to social work. The vast majority of field social workers are female. They have no difficulty in working to the British Association of Social Work's definition of social work: that is, the enhancement of human well-being and the relief and prevention of hardship and suffering through working with individuals, families and groups. Most senior managers are male and to them such a philosophy is not nearly as attractive. How much more engaging it is to think about performance indicators, internal markets, and financial management. The statistics are stark: seven out of eight staff in personal social services organisations are women and most people using the service are women, but seven out of eight managers in these organisations are men.

I want to be optimistic about the future of social work. Enthusiasm and decent young people continue to join, wanting to relieve and prevent hardship and suffering. If they are not to become disillusioned and if a social work service of value is to be retained, an assault upon present management practice has to be made. It may be that women managers will be somewhat put out by my analysis. I would so want to be able to identify their ability to stand out against the male culture. Instead, I am inclined to ask, just as Edith Evans did many years ago: "When a woman behaves like a man why doesn't she behave like a nice man?"

So who will be the new radicals?

Allen Ginsberg, who died last week, was not just an old hippie: the man had important things to teach us

Radical is a word that is being thrown about a lot lately. It has been toned down, or perhaps I should say "toned down", so that we even hear talk of the "radical centre", whatever that thing might be. Yet, at a time of serious political talk by those who despite their age we are given to believe have never inhaled, the death of Allen Ginsberg reminds us of what it means to inhale, not just dope, but a spirit of non-conformism, a vision of an alternative life, of true radicalism.

Ginsberg, if we freeze him in time as another bearded hippie given to ranting long poems, wearing beads and placing flowers in gun barrels, is easy to ignore. Another relic of the Sixties hits the dust, and those naive, idealistic times recede even further into the past. Did anybody really think that advising everyone over the age of 14 to drop acid would change the world? Could poets and writers instigate a new consciousness? Could a war in Vietnam be stopped by a series of raggle-taggle public protests? Could the power of the state be challenged by an ideology that merely divided the world into "them" and "us"?

I cannot say, but Ginsberg's death, or I should say Ginsberg's life, will be totally meaningless if we preserve him in aspic as just another old hippie. It is tempting enough to do just this, especially for those of my generation, the punk generation who were brought up with the credo: "Never trust a hippie".

The nihilism of punk thrived on its own separation, its own precious sep-

aratism, that denied any other sub-culture before it. It had to sever its links with its past to sever its links with a future from which it was alienated. Punk had to present itself as some sort of final solution, as the last counter-cultural movement on earth.

Ginsberg's relentless optimism, his belief in the future, his belief in the death of the miserabilist apathy of punk but also to the myths about lazy, stoned hippies. But then Ginsberg was only belatedly a hippie. In fact he provided the link between the beats and the psychedelic culture of the late Sixties. Like many of the "inventors" of the Sixties he was no spring chicken by the time it arrived.

He will be remembered for more than his poetry, more than the much pan-diced *Howl*, his revolutionary free-form composition which gave voice to the heat ethos, a profound anti-conformism in reaction to the socially repressive Fifties and America's growing global power and consumerist values. Ginsberg will also be remembered for the links he made, the connections he set up. He was a full-time activist for his friends, for literature and only sometimes for politics. He was the consummate fixer, arranger, enabler, curator. His address book was a *Who's Who* of the counter-culture.

Though less respected as a writer than the other two of the triumvirate of beats – Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs – it was Ginsberg who found Kerouac a publisher for *On the Road*. He edited *Naked Lunch* and



Suzanne Moore

encouraged and introduced hordes of lesser-known writers to editors and publishers. Just as he bridged the gap between the beats and the psychedelic drug culture of the Sixties, earlier on he had demonstrated another link. The *Black Mountain Review*, a magazine in which he was involved, helped establish that the beats were the true heirs of Modernism. Providing a support system for his friends, Ginsberg was a part of a group of writers whom Ted Morgan, author of *Literary Outlaws: The Life and Times of William Burroughs*, likens, interestingly enough, to the Bloomsbury group.

Ginsberg also slid easily between the underground and the straight world, enjoying the various gongs he received, and upsetting the old ladies at an award dinner at the National

Arts Club by reading his poem "Cock-sucker Blues". The poet, Ginsberg believed, was a force for social change: his job was to reject all that was boring, respectable and repressed about American life. His homosexuality, somewhat played down in the obituaries, his arrests in his own country and abroad, his Buddhism, his curiosity, all aided him in this quest.

So who are Ginsberg's heirs today, or is the idea of life as a kind of permanent protest, a howl against the system, just a thing of the past? The environmental protesters with their misty-eyed internationalism, cod spiritualism and theatrical style of dissent seem the obvious choice, but there are others. Ginsberg's work prefigured much feminist writing in that it absolutely refused to accept the bourgeois divide between the personal and the political. His best work is often little more than a list of private pain elaborated into an accusatory charge against the whole of society. His mother, Naomi, was, after all, lobotomised for her madness.

Should we also look to the much maligned chemical generation to see Ginsberg's legacy? While it's true enough that they may simply have found a recreational drug that fits snugly into an otherwise completely straight lifestyle, some of its members at least have forged connections with the psychedelic explorers of yesterday. At a Kraut rock celebration I was at last year, Brian Barrett, sometime collaborator of Timothy Leary, drew a crowd of eager ravers in awe of his

contact with Leary, the guru. "The thing about Tim," said Barrett "is that the man has actually been dead for seven years." You can never top the life-enhancing irreverence of these old cosmic jokers. I wonder, too, what Ginsberg made of the Net libertarians for whom information has proved to be power, and to whom making connections is also way of life.

Yet what Ginsberg did that was truly radical, and is needed now more than ever, was to live a life in which politics and culture were not separated into different worlds. They were intertwined, they fed off each other, they aroused each other. This simple and still *avant-garde* idea ruled his life. His death brings home the sterility of the state-sanctioned but disembodied political culture that we are currently supposed to be excited about, a culture that divides the world up into little boxes that we can tick or not. Ginsberg saw it wasn't enough to tick the box. One had to make the box, dismantle the box, play with the box, and then some. Which is how it should be. He is reported to have said, "I'm dying in heaven", and I hope he did.

For all his wisdom, this old fool could also be remarkably silly. When he and Gregory Corso, a fellow poet, had tea with Auden, Corso, who, according to Ted Morgan, liked to make provocative remarks, asked Auden "Are birds spies?" Full of British common sense, Auden replied, "No, I don't think so; who would they report to?" "The trees," said Ginsberg. May his beat go on.

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When the boss's daughter is not assured a job



'Fall-out': John Cudworth, chairman of United (left), and George Mack

Clifford German

The daughter of the chairman of United Assurance, the merged life assurance group which last week announced 2,200 job losses, has become one of the first victims of the cutbacks.

Anthea Cudworth, daughter of John Cudworth and a former investment manager for Refuge Assurance, has lost her job following the decision of chief executive George Mack to close her department down.

According to analysts, the

departure of the chairman's daughter at the hands of his chief executive has caused some friction between the two men.

However, the company denied that Anthea's departure had caused any friction between Mr Cudworth and Mr Mack or that their relationship in any way boded ill for the future of the group.

The apparently strained relations between the two when United announced its results and cost cutting plans to analysts and the press last week was said to have been due to

the late arrival of Mr Mack for the briefing.

When United Friendly and Refuge Assurance announced their merger last August it was anticipated that a quarter of the combined workforce would lose their jobs. In the event nearly a third of the workforce is being made redundant with the closure of more than half the group's branches.

One of the first casualties of the merger was the equities department of the Refuge, based in Gresham Street in the City where Anthea was employed as

an investment manager. Her department has been closed and merged with the United Friendly's investment department in Southwark, south of the river, which itself is due to be relocated within the next 12 months.

Anthea lost her job in December and has now started a two year MBA course at the University of New South Wales, in Sydney.

United Assurance claims that the decision to close the Refuge's investment department was part of the original negotiations which led up to the merger agreement when it was announced last November.

Before the merger he father was chief executive of the Refuge group, with head offices in Wilmerslow, Cheshire. The merged company denied any suggestion that her departure should be blamed on Mr Mack, who came from United Friendly.

Most of the cuts will be implemented before the end of this year and the remainder by autumn, 1998 by which time the sales staff will be down to 4,200 from a peak of 6,400 in December, 1995. Branch numbers will be cut from just 279 to 116.

The group is also spending £46m to integrate the computer systems of the two companies.

This will bring total merger costs to £76m. However, it is forecasting annual savings of £37m, including £31m in reduced salaries.

MacLaurin bows out at Tesco with record profit

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Lord MacLaurin, the Tesco chairman who retires in June, delivered his farewell set of results at the supermarket group yesterday, bowing out with record profits, the shares close to their all-time high and with the company still in pole position as the nation's leading grocer.

Lord MacLaurin, who joined the company as a management trainee in 1959, said he would

"I'll be sad to leave as it has been my baby. [In 1977] not too many people gave us much of a chance"

he said to leave after nearly 40 years but would remain busy with his role as the England cricket captain and his non-executive directorships.

"I'll be sad to leave as it has been my baby. We created it when we came out of Green Shield Stamps in 1977. The aim then was to be the number one. Back then, not too many people gave us much of a chance. I'm very proud of what we've done with what was then a pretty mediocre company."

"But one of the skills is

knowing when to leave. I've spent a lot of time bringing people on in the business. And I shall be keeping a fatherly eye on my protégés."

He said that in addition to Terry Leahy, who moved up to the chief executive role in February, there would be other board appointments later this year. Analysts expect these may be in distribution, with another position created to run the growing European operations.

Commenting on Lord MacLaurin's impending departure, deputy chairman David Reid said: "He's a charismatic character and people will miss that. But Tesco is not managed like a Thatcherite cabinet. Decisions are made collectively."

Lord MacLaurin, who turned 60 earlier this year, will step down at Tesco's annual meeting on 4 June.

When he was appointed managing director in 1973 Tesco was a family-run organisation with a "pile it high, sell it cheap" philosophy. But in 1977 Lord MacLaurin won a key battle with the Cohen family in persuading the board to abandon the downmarket and dated Green Shield Stamps. Tesco gradually started to re-invent itself as the friend of the middle classes and a genuine rival to Sainsbury with higher stores, stocking higher quality goods at keen prices in increasingly larger, out-of-town locations.

The expansion continued in the 1980s until in the last few years Tesco began to draw close to and later overtake Sainsbury. The strong performance con-

MacLaurin's 38-year innings at Tesco draws to a successful close

The MacLaurin Years

- 1959 Meets Sir Jack Cohen, Tesco's founder, at Eastbourne's Grand Hotel where his old school cricket team stays when on tour.
- Cohen offers to match MacLaurin's engineering training salary and give him a car to move to Tesco. MacLaurin accepts.
- 1970 Joins Tesco board.
- 1973 Becomes managing director.
- 1977 Wins battle against the Cohen family to abandon Green Shield Stamps. The victory marks the beginning of the new Tesco. MacLaurin begins to abandon the old "pile it high, sell it cheap" philosophy for a more upmarket image with sleeker out of town stores in the 1980s.
- 1985 Becomes Tesco's first non-family chairman.
- 1994 Beats Sainsbury in bid battle for William Low, the Scottish supermarket chain.
- 1995 Launches Tesco Clubcard, forcing rivals to follow suit. It now has 9.5m members, overtaking Sainsbury's as Britain's leading grocer for the first time.
- 1996 Takes the lead in supermarket financial services with Clubcard Plus debit card.
- 1997 Now 60, prepares to bow out at June annual meeting with record profits of £750m and Tesco still number one. Wins Businessman of the Year award. "Starts work as chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board, saying, "I can do a Tesco on cricket I would be absolutely thrilled."
- On his without Tesco: "I'll be sad to leave as it has been my baby. But I shall be keeping a fatherly eye on my protégés."



tinued yesterday with the group's results for the year to 22 February showing a 10 per cent increase in pre-tax profit to £750m.

Margins fell 0.4 percentage points largely due to the petrol price war which has now eased. Like-for-like sales increased by 7.5 per cent and are running 6 per cent higher since the year-end.

However, the company said that inflation fell from 3 to 1 per cent making the industry more competitive.

The strong sales growth means Tesco maintains its market lead over Sainsbury. According to figures from the

Institute of Grocery Distribution, Tesco's UK market share is 14 per cent compared to Sainsbury's 12 per cent.

Tesco will this year open

"He's a charismatic character, we will miss him - but we are not run like a Thatcherite cabinet"

eight superstores, 12 compact stores and four city centre Metro stores in. However it will open only two branches of Tesco Express, the petrol sta-

tions with convenience stores attached, after the impact of last year's petrol price war.

"It was a trial and we've put

Express on the back-burner

stores and refits as the company feels the hot food and take-out market has growth potential. "We are doing cooked chickens and pizzas. We could do hot pies and burgers. There is huge potential."

The Tesco range of Tesco clothing is also to be expanded as it follows Asda with its successful George range.

Though Tesco is expanding in central Europe and Ireland with the recent purchase of the Quinnsworth stores, Lord MacLaurin said there was still room for growth in Britain.

"We have flexible formats with the superstores, compact and Metros and that will help us

continue to grow." Tesco has signed up 9.5 million members to its loyalty card and 190,000 to its ClubCard Plus deposit account scheme. The push into financial services will continue with a new credit card and more new products will follow.

Tesco denied any interest in the Littlewoods high street stores, recently put up for sale. However, it said it could become involved in the sale of gas and electricity. Group sales were up 15 per cent at £14.98bn. The dividend was raised 10 per cent to 7.8p.

Tesco shares closed 11.5p higher at 364p.

Comment, page 21

At least holding the meeting in Nottingham will permit Mr Clarke the rhetorical flourish of being able to point to some actual manufacturers when he talks about the damage the strong pound is doing to exports. For the rise in sterling back above its floor of DM2.78 in the European exchange rate mechanism - though it edged back down below it yesterday - will be his excuse for turning down Mr George's advice to raise interest rates. As far as the City is concerned, this is the foregone conclusion of the meeting.

Scottish entrepreneurs stifled

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Scotland, proud birthplace of inventors such as Logie Baird and Alexander Graham Bell, is suffering from a shortage of entrepreneurs. Government policy has paid too much attention to luring inward investors rather than growing job-creating small businesses, according to two papers presented at the centenary annual conference of the Scottish Economics Society yesterday.

Gavin McCrone, professor of economics at Edinburgh University, concluded that Scotland's record on growing indigenous small businesses was about the worst in the UK, itself not very entrepreneurial compared with other countries. Small firms create more jobs,

and Professor McCrone said: "Stronger growth in this sector could have rectified many other weaknesses in the economy."

Scotland was left with an unemployment rate above the UK average, and pockets of chronic unemployment of up to 30 per cent where traditional industries had vanished. Although there had been astonishing success in attracting inward investment, it was only because of substantial emigration that Scottish unemployment was not much higher.

He noted that rates of small business formation are higher in regions where home ownership is most widespread, suggesting the only finance many entrepreneurs can raise is a second mortgage on their house.

Along with Professor Mike Danson from the University of

Paisley, Professor McCrone criticised the bias towards encouraging inward investment. He argued that the Scottish economy had been made over-dependent on the electronics industry, a notoriously volatile business where companies can be overwhelmed swiftly by new technologies or rival products.

Professor McCrone said: "It is time that the promotion of new business and small business growth was given the same emphasis and support that Locate in Scotland was set up to provide for inward investment."

Professor Danson pointed out that the 1,000 jobs created by Korean company Hyundai in Fife were each estimated to be costing the taxpayer an average of £120,000, yet there was a shortage of funding for local enterprises.

Referring to the fact that 1996 had been the Year of the Entrepreneur in Scotland as part of the effort to boost what was seen as a dismal record in small business start-ups, he said: "We in Scotland are criticised for having a dependency culture, an unwillingness to create opportunities for ourselves."

But he argued the difficulty lay in the unwillingness of the business development agencies and banks to fund proposals. This was where the "anti-entrepreneur Scots" were to be found.

It is encouraging, however, that Scotland, the birthplace of the study of political economy thanks to David Hume and Adam Smith, is not experiencing a shortage of economists. There were more than 70 at yesterday's conference.

Comment, page 21

Halifax plans windfall share dealing service

Halifax Building Society is launching a new Shareholder Account to provide an easy-to-use and inexpensive share dealing service for its 8 million members when they receive their free shares in the summer, writes Clifford German.

Members who want to keep their Halifax shares will be able to hold them free of charge in a Shareholder Account for at least three years.

Account-holders will be able to own, buy and sell their Halifax shares, attend shareholders' meetings, and speak and vote, all without having to keep the share certificate. Dividend cheques will be paid into the account and regular statements issued, the aim being to take the strain out of

being a first-time shareholder. Account-holders will also have exclusive access to a Halifax share dealing service, which will be launched to coincide with the start of share dealings in June. For the first 10 days after dealings begin they will be able to sell their windfall shares free of charge.

Initially account-holders will only be able to hold Halifax shares but at some future date they will be able to hold other shares as well. A Halifax share PEP will also be available.

Members will be told late this month or early next how many free shares they can look forward to getting when the society converts into a bank and floats on the stock market.

RJB stuns City as profits rise by 10%

Michael Harrison

RJB Mining, Britain's biggest coal producer, yesterday confounded analysts' forecasts by unveiling a 10 per cent jump in pre-tax profits last year to £189m and disclosing that it had repaid all the debt used to fund its £815m acquisition of the English coalfields three years early.

The upbeat news followed RJB's announcement on Monday that it had joined forces with National Power and Taseco to explore the development of a new generation of clean coal power stations.

Shares in RJB continued their climb, rising another 7p to 397.5p following Monday's 10 per cent increase.

Richard Budge, chief executive, said he was confident of coming to an acceptable agreement with the three main coal-fired electricity generators when RJB's supply contracts expire next March. He also voiced optimism that RJB would strike deals to develop its clean coal stations with other generators than National Power.

RJB is forecasting that total UK demand for coal will slip from 63 million tonnes in 1996 to 58 million tonnes this year in the face of the "dash for gas" by the electricity industry. The company predicts that by the turn of the century gas-fired generation will have displaced 50 million tonnes of coal con-

sumption compared with 26 million tonnes last year.

But it believes that improving cost-competitiveness, allied to the arrival of clean coal stations will maintain a market for coal of around 45 million tonnes a year.

The upcoming negotiations with National Power, PowerGen and the Energy Group, formerly Eastern Electricity, will be crucial in determining RJB's medium-term future. Mr Budge said that no talks had yet taken place and judging by past experience, the generators would leave it until the eleventh hour.

However, RJB is pressing ahead with plans to spend nearly £400m this year on the development of its deep mines and other capital expenditure.

Last year's advance in profits was achieved despite a 10 per cent fall in turnover to £1.3bn. Mr Budge paid tribute to the increased efficiency achieved by the RJB workforce which has seen average production costs fall from over £1.30 a gigajoule under British Coal to £1.17.

Buoyed by a strong operating cash flow of £321m, RJB repaid the remaining £160m of bank debt during the year - well in advance of the five-year time-scale set out when the group took over the coalfields in December 1994. At the same time, RJB repaid £127m to shareholders through two share buy-backs, leaving it with gearing at the year-end of 40 per cent.

STOCK MARKETS					
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low
FTSE 100	4269.30	-2.40	-0.1	4444.30	4056.60
FTSE 250	4519.70	+0.20	+0.0	4720.40	4449.40
FTSE 350	2105.50	-0.90	-0.0	2194.30	2017.90
FTSE SmallCap	2784.36	+2.11	+0.1	2874.20	2176.29
FTSE All-Share	2077.18	-0.69	-0.0	2163.94	1989.78
New York	6562.71	+6.80	+0.1	7095.16	5932.94
Tokyo	19021.70	+305.03	+1.7	22666.80	17303.85
Hong Kong	12388.57	+110.73	+0.9	13866.24	12055.17
Frankfurt	3328.76	+16.68	+0.5	3460.64	2846.77

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES					
Short sterling*	UK medium gilt	US long bond	3m Euro	6m Euro	12m Euro
1 month	1 year	2 year	3 year	4 year	5 year
UK 6.13	7.03	7.61	8.06	7.70	8.16
US 5.59	6.23	6.89	6.31	7.11	6.94
Japan 0.44	0.53	2.17	1.82	-	-
Switzerland 3.22	3.22	5.91	6.36	6.70	-

CURRENCIES						
£/\$	£/DM	£/¥	£/A\$	£/NZ\$	£/HK\$	
\$ (London)	1.6224	-0.026	1.5275	0.6160	+0.24	0.8547
\$ (NY)	1.6263	-0.156	1.5305	0.6148	+0.05	0.8524
DM (London)	2.7775	-1.098	2.2615	0.6710	unch	1.4886
¥ (London)	204.624	37.108	163.443	126.180	+20.425	107.00
A\$ (London)	0.61	-0.3	0.63	1.055	+0.1	0.958

Other West exchange rates and US West Day at 1200 hours

Percent	Dollar			Euro		
	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago	Yesterday	Change	Year Ago
\$ (London)	1.6224	-0.026	1.5275	0.6160	+0.24	0.8547
\$ (NY)	1.6263	-0.156	1.5305	0.6148	+0.05	0.8524
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A\$ (London)	0.61	-0.3	0.63	1.055	+0.1	0.958

OTHER INDICATORS

Yesterday	Day's chg	Year Ago	Index	Yesterday	Day's chg	Year Ago	
Oil Brent \$	17.43	+0.01	20.15	RPI	155.0	-2.7	250.9
Gold \$	348.95	-0.2	395.05	GDP	109.7	+2.6	107.0
							25.40

MAJOR PRICE CHANGES					
Name	Price (p)	Change (p)	Name	Price (p)	Change (p)
Barclays	115	11	Adams WE	282.5	2.15
Ashley/Lauria	144.5	13	Vickers	226	+10.5
Albright & Wilson	173.5	13	British Steel	162.5	7

مكتبة من الأصيل



COMMENT

It is hard to level criticism at a man who turned a ramshackle, family-run outfit into a finely tuned prizefighter that has even the mighty Sainsbury's on the ropes.

This could be the high-water mark for Tesco

Judged by the depth of his George Hamilton-style tan, Lord MacLaurin, Britain's leading grocer, has been winding down from his duties at Tesco for some time. Just back from a tour of Zimbabwe and New Zealand with the England cricket team (where no doubt he slipped in a couple of rounds of golf as well), he is already gearing up for another round of bonding sessions with England's cricketers where he will try and imbue them with some Tesco-style winning spirit.

Still, at least he managed to draw breath yesterday for his farewell set of Tesco results prior to his retirement in June. He could not have asked for a more triumphant exit had it all been meticulously planned. Record profits, Britain's top supermarket group, businessman of the year and recently enabled to boot. Perhaps he should run for Prime Minister or deputy God.

But what if the MacLaurin legacy? Will the bandwagon continue to roll or does this mark Tesco's high-water mark? It is hard to level criticism at a man who turned a ramshackle, family-run outfit into a finely tuned prizefighter that has even the mighty Sainsbury's on the ropes. From getting out of green shield stamps and taking Tesco upmarket in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the company has made relentless progress.

From loyalty cards to derivative formats, to financial services, Tesco got there first and forced the rest to follow. There have been mistakes. France looks as if it has been mothballed and it would be no surprise if the

Catteau business was sold altogether before long. And analysts say that Tesco might have lost it in the early 1990s but for an influx of new blood in the shape of Terry Leahy, chief executive.

Many are going to say that Tesco's purple patch cannot last for too much longer, and that Lord MacLaurin's successors cannot hope to match him. Such was Tony Greener's fate when he took over at Guinness. Suddenly the market didn't seem so easy as in the Sir Anthony Tennant era. Stock market expectations had in any case become exaggerated, as they once were for Sainsbury's, and Mr Greener's unenviable task was to restore reality. It could happen in the trolley wars too. Sainsbury's must surely recover ground soon and Sainsbury continues to make headway.

Business should still be suspicious of Blair

The battle between the two main parties for the "business" vote becomes a laugh a minute. First there was Tony Blair on Monday with his extraordinary claim that Labour is more a party of free market economics than the Tories. Now there is John Major with his belated £800m off the rates for small business. Anyone would think there were votes in it.

The more interesting question about Labour and business, however, is whether

Labour when in power is going to be the party of small or big business. There's an important difference here for the interests of the two are often not the same and sometimes diametrically opposed. The rhetoric, from Tony Blair at least, is that Labour is the party of small business, which would imply a vigorous competition policy. But what little action and defined policy there has been so far would rather indicate the contrary - Labour as the party of big business and the corporate state. This would imply that the interests of domestic competition will always take second place to those of Britain's big business national champions.

The most glaring example of this so far is Mr Blair's "deal" with British Telecom under which BT gets early release from restrictions on its freedom to offer broadcast TV across the network in return for wiring up schools and other public institutions to the superhighway. Both Labour and BT are these days keen to play down the significance of the arrangement, but there is nonetheless little doubt that BT expects a very sympathetic hearing from a Labour government, not just on this issue but on a number of other fronts as well.

There are some important tests for Labour looming almost immediately it gets into power. First there is the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on gas charges. Will Labour want to back the hard-line consumerist stance of Clare Spottiswoode, the gas regulator, or does it have

some sympathy for Transco's plight? If it wants gas included in the windfall profits tax, something is going to have to be left in the kitty. Another test comes from the MMC report on whether to allow further consolidation in the brewing industry. And just how wedded and glued is Labour to the cause of competition in the gas and electricity markets? Not very, seems to be the answer.

Tony Blair's talk of "partnership" with business should send out the strongest possible warning signals. It is not the function of government to set up exclusive "you scratch my back and I'll scratch your back" arrangements with companies and business. The proper function of Government is to provide a stable economy for business to flourish in and a set of rules and regulations to ensure fair play. It is to be hoped that this is what Labour does stand for, but there are good grounds for suspicion.

Scots need some lessons in enterprise

They brought us penicillin, television and the pneumatic tyre, not to mention telephones, modern roads and the mackintosh. They also introduced the world to the Glasgow handshake and deep fried pizzas, but let us pass over that.

And yet now, according to two Scottish professors, their countrymen have run out of inventive, entrepreneurial flair. The race

that did more than any other to develop that bastion of enterprise culture, Hong Kong, is found wanting when it comes to applying the lessons back home.

Scotland, according to Professor Mike Danson of the University of Paisley and Professor Gavin McCrone of Edinburgh University, lies at the bottom of the entrepreneurial heap. Designating 1996 as the Year of the Entrepreneur did not do much good either. The Scots have the worst record of any area in the UK for small business creation, the engine of jobs growth. What is more, they have only been spared an even worse unemployment rate by the high rates of economic migration elsewhere.

There is a serious point to this particular Scottish lament. For the worry is that Scotland has become so reliant on inward investment that it has lost the ability to invest in itself. It has developed a dependency culture where it is easier to create Hyundai jobs at £120,000 a throw than create job opportunities for itself by nourishing home grown talent.

The professors lay the blame squarely at the doors of the business development agencies and banks, fingering them as the "anti-enterprise Scots". Perhaps these organisations need an overhaul at the top. But where are the Scots to help point them in a more entrepreneurial direction? How about Brian Souter to run the Scottish Development Agency and his sister, Ann Slog, to chair Royal Bank of Scotland. Any better suggestions?

ScotRail deal could be first test for Labour

Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

The acquisition by National Express, the coach and rail group, of ScotRail, the train operator, may prove to be the first test of competition policy for Labour if it wins the general election. No announcement was made on the deal by the Department of Transport and Industry before Parliament was dissolved yesterday, leaving the next government to decide its fate.

The situation could result in a Labour administration referring the deal to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. It is likely that Margaret Beckett, the shadow President of the Board of Trade, would rule on the acquisition.

North of the border, ScotRail operates all local and commuter services, although not daytime InterCity trains, over a 1,380-mile network. It is also responsible for sleeper services from Euston to Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness and the reprieved West Highland sleeper to Fort William.

National Express beat competition from Stagecoach, the Scottish-based bus company,

and from a management buyout team. The bid from National Express, which has many coach services north of the border, is sure to face intense scrutiny from the competition authorities. The company has held detailed talks with the Office of Fair Trading to head off a referral.

Labour has previously threatened to use the OFT and MMC to extract higher service levels from bus operators that ended up running train services in the newly privatised network.

In Scotland, National Express owns Scottish Citylink - one of the largest coach companies - and runs virtually all the trains. In many instances, both companies run rival services. For example between Glasgow and Inverness, Citylink runs eight coaches a day, ScotRail runs three trains on the same route. Stagecoach, which has a 20 per cent share of the Scottish bus market, was told that it would face a automatic referral if it won the ScotRail franchise. The action initiated Brian Souter, the company's executive chairman, who said his company would not have had it there had been insurmountable problems.

National Express's vast coach



Competition poser: Margaret Beckett may have to rule on National Express's acquisition

Photograph: Brian Harris

network and its large rail division - with revenues greater than £350m - have seen the company already tangled with the OFT. Last year, the company's involvement in both coach and rail services on the London to East Midlands/ South Yorkshire corridor would, according to the OFT, lead to "a significant loss of competition".

The competition authority

sought onerous undertakings - including the withdrawal of coach services from London to Derby, Leicester, Sheffield, Chesterfield and Nottingham. The MMC disagreed and National Express was allowed to keep train operator Midland Main Line. However there were many influential figures in the industry that disagreed.

In evidence to the MMC, the

rail regulator, John Swift QC - a barrister specialising in competition law - said that there was a "significant potential public interest detriment" and "only a structural remedy provided an adequate solution. This could require divestment of either the coach or rail business".

Investors' fears about Labour blocking the deal, however, could be allayed by behind the

scenes negotiations in the party. Labour-controlled Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority, which has a big say in how the service is run, was instructed by party officials not to delay the letting of the franchise.

ScotRail will prove a difficult railway to run. But National Express is unlikely to want to lose it, as it is the company's best buy from British Rail.

IN BRIEF

Eurotunnel plea for more time

French shareholders in Eurotunnel have called for a postponement of the extraordinary meeting to approve its £8.7bn debt restructuring from June to December. Adact, which represents the bulk of the company's 470,000 French investors, said Eurotunnel needed more time to negotiate an extension to its 65-year Channel Tunnel concession with the British government following the election. Eurotunnel intends to seek shareholder authorisation for the refinancing as soon as it gets the go-ahead to resume freight shuttle services this summer.

Rail freight grants unclaimed

The Department of Transport paid out less than half the amount available in grants to help with the transfer of freight from roads to rail, according to a Commons Public Accounts Committee report. The report said £32m out of an available £70m was paid in the last 10 years. It attributed the figures to restrictive rules and onerous bureaucracy. The volume of annual freight transferred from roads to rail fell to 10 million tonnes in 1996 from 16 million in 1985.

Receiverships back at low level

The number of receiverships in the first quarter of the year declined to the lowest since 1989, according to figures from accountancy firm Deloitte and Touche. The total of 407 was the best since the last boom, and only slightly higher than the late-1980s level. The full-year total for 1996 was also the lowest since 1989.

Compaq to create 200 jobs

Compaq, the computer company, is to create more than 200 jobs at its Erskine plant near Glasgow, increasing its workforce to over 2,000. It said the jobs were part of its continuing expansion aim at making Compaq the third largest computer company in the world by the year 2000.

BT borrows \$1bn to fund merger

British Telecom launched a \$1bn fixed-rate bond issue, repayable on 25 April 2002. Joint managers for the transaction are Merrill Lynch and SBC Warburg. The coupon has been set at 6.75 per cent and the re-offer price at 99.05 per cent to give an effective yield of 15 basis points over the five-year benchmark Treasury. BT said it needed funds for its merger with MCL.

Big pay rise for biotech group chief

Vanguard Medical, the biotechnology group which raised £46.4m in a flotation in May, revealed that its chief executive received a 46 per cent jump in pay to £222,500 last year. Robert Mansfield, formerly of SmithKline Beecham, also received a further 381,946 options in 1996, taking his total to 1.07 million at prices ranging from 10p to 501p. The company almost tripled its loss to £11m in the year to December.

Sumitomo investor seeks damages

A shareholder in Sumitomo Corp, the Japanese industrial conglomerate under investigation for unauthorised copper trading, issued a writ against current and former executives. Yubo Sangyo, an Osaka-based textile company, claims Sumitomo executives were responsible for losses of £2.6m (£1.6m) caused by the unauthorised copper deals. It is seeking a total of ¥300bn (£1.5m) in damages.

£22m bill for Tarmac over PSA

Tarmac, Britain's biggest construction group, received a £22.6m bill, over four times what it had budgeted, after losing a court battle with the Government. It opposed repayment of money paid in to cover restructuring of the state-owned Property Services Agency, which Tarmac bought into after its privatisation. Tarmac had been given £60m and the court ruled it should pay back £20m plus £2.6m interest. The court said the PSA had been in a better financial state than was previously thought.

German jobless rate down but Waigel gives warning

Terry Macalister

The continued rise in German unemployment levels was finally halted last month. However, Theo Waigel, Finance Minister, admitted yesterday that the government's targets on reducing unemployment would not be met.

The German Labour Office said that unemployment fell by 15,000 to a seasonally adjusted 4.3 million in March. February data were also revised to

show a decline in joblessness, the first since April 1996.

German central bank figures put the seasonally adjusted March jobless rate at 11.2 per cent of the workforce, down from 11.3 per cent in February. But Labour Office officials said there was little sign that the economy was creating new jobs.

Mr Waigel said: "We cannot rule out that unemployment levels will be higher than the 4.2 million stated in the [government's] annual economic report."

He accepted that the labour market's stubborn performance would affect the federal budget. But he insisted there would be "no direct influence on the timetable for introducing the euro".

The government immediately came under fire over the labour figures from opposition politicians, employers and union officials.

Trudolf Scharping, parliamentary leader of the opposition Social Democrats, said the

unemployment figures indicated that all the government's budget data for this year were skewed. He predicted the May tax estimate would show much larger revenue shortfalls than expected.

Dieter Hundt, president of the German Employers Federation, said that the government had gone back on promises made last year to lower the high social security costs faced by employers when taking on staff.

"These promises have not

been fulfilled in the last 14 months," Mr Hundt said, referring to the failed "Alliance for Jobs" pact early last year that sought to link job creation to moderate wage demands by German unions.

Germany's top union officials urged employers and government to work with unions to reduce unemployment. Dieter Schulte, chairman of the German Trade Union Federation (DGB), warned of serious consequences if the attempt failed.

Trade unions last year walked away from the jobs pact, which was designed to link job creation with modest wage demands, when the extent of the spending cuts in Bonn's current austerity package started to become known.

Hinting that the DGB and its member trade unions would be ready for a second attempt at cooperation with employers and politicians, Mr Schulte said that a mood of "give and take" was now required.

Fillip for Lloyd's as CU takes stake in agency

Terry Macalister

The Lloyd's of London insurance market received a shot in the arm yesterday when Commercial Union became the first UK composite insurer to take a controlling stake in a Lloyd's underwriting agency.

The arrival of CU at Lloyd's, following hot on the heels of big American and Bermudan agency purchasers, marks a further stage in the restructuring of the insurance market as individual names give way to corporate investors.

The British composite plans to use the £5.8m acquisition of a 51 per cent stake in Marlborough as a springboard for further growth. Peter Rice, CU's UK divisional director, said: "If others [agencies] were attracted to us we would be in-

terested in talking to them." Marlborough underwrites business worth £80m, but CU said it planned to increase this by building up its own capacity in Marlborough syndicates.

CU expects the agency to become a prime participant in the Lloyd's market.

However, CU insisted that Marlborough would be managed as a separate business and not subsumed into the composite insurer's empire. Traditional names, who still make up about half of Marlborough's investors, would not be replaced.

CU is to buy a 51 per cent stake in Marlborough, which is a world leader in the insurance of cruise ships like the QE2 owned by Cunard, and North Sea platforms. It also provides professional indemnity cover for lawyers.

Marlborough, which until 18 months ago was a classic, family-owned Lloyd's concern known as Bader & Marsh, has been extremely profitable. Its three basic syndicates ran up profits as high as 26.4 per cent of their capacity in their last financial year, which was 1994, under Lloyd's rules.

Angus Sladen, managing director of Marlborough and himself a name, said the tie-up with CU would give his agency the "good source of stable capital" that was now needed. While market conditions had been good in the past, the future was tougher.

The CU acquisition, which involves an initial £2.9m cash payment followed by a further £2.9m contingent on business activity, was welcomed by Lloyd's chairman, Sir David Rowland.

Dixons sells stake in store chain to Cellnet

Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Dixons, the electrical retailer, has sold a 40 per cent stake in The Link, its mobile phone store chain, to Cellnet, the mobile phone network operator, to help fund rapid expansion.

Cellnet will pay Dixons an initial £25m, with further cash payments of up to £32m depending on performance.

There are 87 branches of The Link, mainly in the South-east of England. With the additional funds Dixons hopes to extend the network to 200 branches across the country within three years, creating 750 jobs.

Commenting on the deal, Cellnet said: "We've been very pleased with the strong growth in Cellnet connections through The Link stores. We like the format and would like to see more."

Dixons said it was "pleased with the price for a three-year-old business which made a £2.9m loss last year. Finance director Ian Livingston also said the sharing of investment would aid faster roll-out of the stores with lower risk."

Dixons stressed that the Cellnet deal would not alter its unbiased sales stance and that its stores would continue to sell the Orange and One-2-One networks as well. "Dixons has complete management control and we will continue to offer unbiased advice and will train staff accordingly," Mr Livingston said.

The Link specialises in the sale of mobile phones, fixed-line telephones, faxes, pagers and personal organisers as well as a range of BT services. It made a pre-tax loss of £2.9m last year on sales of £21m. It is expected to make a profit this year on a substantially higher sales figure. Net assets at 27 April last year were £7.5m.

P&O pays \$85,000 to settle Florida charge

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

Peninsular & Oriental said yesterday it had paid Florida's attorney general \$85,000 in settlement of a charge that the company's Princess cruise line subsidiary had overcharged passengers over four years.

Analysts had feared that P&O might be liable to a fine of up to \$150m, although the company maintained throughout that such a figure was fanciful.

The company described the payment yesterday as a "contribution" to the cost of Florida's investigation and said it admitted no liability or wrongdoing.

separately from the basic price in advertising campaigns.

The Florida authorities alleged that other payments, such as to privately owned tug-boat operators, had been included in an add-on charge in order to keep the basic price of a cruise as low as possible. A typical P&O seven-day cruise might be advertised at \$599 but have a \$120 surcharge added to cover other charges usually described as something like "government taxes, port taxes and barbour dues".

Peter Ratcliffe, president of Princess Cruises, said: "We welcome the completion of our discussions with the attorney general's office and will be making the necessary amendments to our advertising practice by 1 June."

Shares in P&O jumped 11.5p on the news to close yesterday

at 629p. Last month they had fallen sharply after a report that the company might be liable to pay up to \$15,000 for each passenger that had boarded a P&O cruise ship in Florida during the past four years.

P&O's settlement follows an agreement by six other cruise operators to pay \$295,500 to the Florida attorney general and change their own advertising. P&O had originally refused to join that class payment, claiming that its own advertising met state standards.

The enforced advertising changes are thought to be more onerous for some of P&O's rivals, which specialise in shorter cruises, because for them the add-on charges make up a greater proportion of the fare. One-day cruises advertised as costing \$90 with a \$70 add-on will now appear much more expensive.

business

A confusion in Spain over cock and bull

A highly entertaining book goes on sale this week which reveals the eating habits of more than 40 leaders in the property industry. *Food for Thought* is the brainchild of Iain Waters, director of MEPC, and Derek Penfold of Publishing Business.

Proceeds from the £10 cover price will go towards Cerepote, the London charity for the homeless. The illustrated book tells us amongst other things that Sir Peter Hunt of Land Securities likes nothing more than to tuck into the Sulton at Rules restaurant near the Strand, while Andrew Huntley of Richard Ellis prefers to shoot and cook his own pheasant.

The story that really caught my eye, however, was from Derek Penfold, who has long been involved in property publishing. Derek says that finding these fine avocados in the bins of the Savoy reminded him of a meal he once ate in a restaurant just a few streets away from the bull ring in Barcelona.

Derek decided to try the day's special, which roughly translated from the Catalan as "the biggest chicken of the plains". He duly tucked into the "two dumpling-looking pieces of meat each as big as a well, these avocados - pale in colour but tenderly cooked in the exquisite and only mildly fiery sauce".

Derek found the dish "magnificent", to the delight of the staff. Only then did he discover he had eaten the testicles of a bull killed the day before in the nearby bull ring. Some months later he returned and, undeterred, ordered the same dish: "but the meat was if anything more tender, but much smaller per portion. I asked the waiter whether this was only a trick of my memory, but he replied, 'it is not always the bull which loses the fight'."

City head-hunters tell me they are wallpapering their offices with CVs from Deutsche Morgan Grenfell traders eager to test the waters elsewhere. The epidemic

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Derek Penfold: Highlighting London's dining habits

doesn't necessarily mean said traders are unhappy at DMG, they tell me, rather that the "two-year handcut" contracts which lured them to the outfit in the first place are beginning to expire. Michael Dobson, charged by Deutsche Bank with the task of creating a global investment bank based on Morgan Grenfell, started his hiring spree just over two years ago. Hence the blizzard of CVs.

Sean Lance, the man anointed to succeed Glaxo Wellcome chief executive Sir Richard Sykes next year, has clearly been anticipating his rise in status in advance of the event.

We learn that Mr Lance, who trousered a bandy £562,000 from the company last year, has moved out of his salubrious pad in Loo-doo's Draycott Place, close to fashionable Sloane Square. History does not relate where he has moved, but it appears that Glaxo has not made any money out of the £75,000 it invested in the home in the early 1990s to ease Mr Lance's move from his South African homeland.

Despite soaring house prices elsewhere in central London, we learn from the latest accounts that Glaxo has merely been paid back its original £75,000. Let's hope Glaxo's other investments prove better value.

James Bethell, son of Lord Bethell of Romford and former editor of this very column, is supervising the launch of the Ministry of Sound's new international radio show. The Ministry of Sound is a converted warehouse somewhere in the depths of the Elephant & Castle, south London, where teenagers spend large amounts of money to "rave" to the latest "jungle vibes" or something like that. It is owned by James Palumbo, the go-getting son of Lord Palumbo.

Young James is also taking afternoons off to work at Tory central office during the general election campaign. No doubt his famous Dunkirk spirit will come in handy. As for the radio show, which he describes as carrying the "most cutting-edge dance music available" (i.e. incomprehensible electronic beeping), broadcasting starts this week in Japan and will commence in the UK on 17 April. Two hours of beeping a week will be broadcast on the Kiss radio station, with sponsorship from Bud Ice. James says there is also interest from Turkey, China and South Africa.

I strongly urge him to combine both his careers. Media fame and electoral victory awaits for DJs "Def Jam Portillo" and "Two-Pac Howard".

John Willcock

Paper prices cut Smurfit profits

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

apparent eagerness of Morgan Stanley to sell its 36 per cent stake. Profits of £135m would put the shares, down 4p at 155.5p, on a forward p/e of 19. High enough, even with non-UK investors holding one-third of the equity.

Trust me, says Tarmac boss

Tarmac boss Neville Sturges did not quite use Tony Blair's electoral mantra, "Trust me", but the message was much the same. A restructured Tarmac, he promised, had escaped from the past and an open road of opportunity lay ahead.

Britain's biggest construction and building materials group has certainly taken investors for a switch-back ride over the past five years. But the real benefits of its big initiative, swapping assets with Wimpey, are yet to be felt.

Making comparisons with "Tony Blair's New Labour Party" is not entirely inappropriate. When chairman John Banham unveiled the Wimpey deal at the end of 1995 he said the future was bright for "New Tarmac".

There was certainly a slick, electoral-style presentation on show yesterday as Tarmac unveiled end-of-year 1996 financial results. The only problem for the stage managers is that Sturges might have the value of Blair, but has the wit of Neil Kinnock. His reiteration of the words "shareholder value" almost obscured the basic message that there had been a 29 per cent improvement in operating profits and an upturn was predicted this year for its core UK businesses.

For the 12 months to 31 December the reported pre-tax profit figure was an unimpressive £10.5m, which compared with £20.3m last time. But strip out exceptional items, like the £55m restructuring charge following the Wimpey swap, and the pre-tax result rose from £67.1m to a respectable £75.5m.

Tarmac has re-arranged its business into two main lines, heavy building materials and construction services. The former saw operating profit surge 27 per cent due to a strong performance from its US activities. Construction services also showed signs of improvement and Tarmac is proud of its £1.4bn current order book and the potential for FFI contracts worth £800m. Never one to stint on optimism, Mr Sturges was

trumpeting a much improved outlook for this year and boasting of rationalisation benefits of almost twice the original target.

On the basis of forecast profits this year of £125m, before exceptional, the shares, up 11p at 155p yesterday, trade on a prospective price/earnings ratio of 12.8, a discount to both the market and the rest of the sector. With a 6 per cent yield, that looks fair value.

Highland still has a hangover

The warm glow to be had from Highland Distillers' magnificent Famous Grouse, Macallan and Highland Park whiskies has been sadly lacking from the company's share price in recent years, which has sagged from a high of £51p at the beginning of 1994 to yesterday's close of 34p, down 1.5p on the day.

A glance at the five-year trading record indicates why that should be. Highland has been a dismal performer in financial terms with earnings per share bouncing around between 20p and 22p since 1993. Yesterday's half-year figures to February provided little evidence that things are materially on the mend, with earnings up a pedestrian 4 per cent to 12.5p.

That of course is the more meaningful measure than operating profits of 41 per cent, which benefited from the inclusion for the first time of a full six-month contribution from Macallan, bought last year in a less than amicable tussle for control of one of Scotland's classic malts. As forecast, Macallan chipped in £5m of profit but the financing costs of the deal wiped most of the benefit.

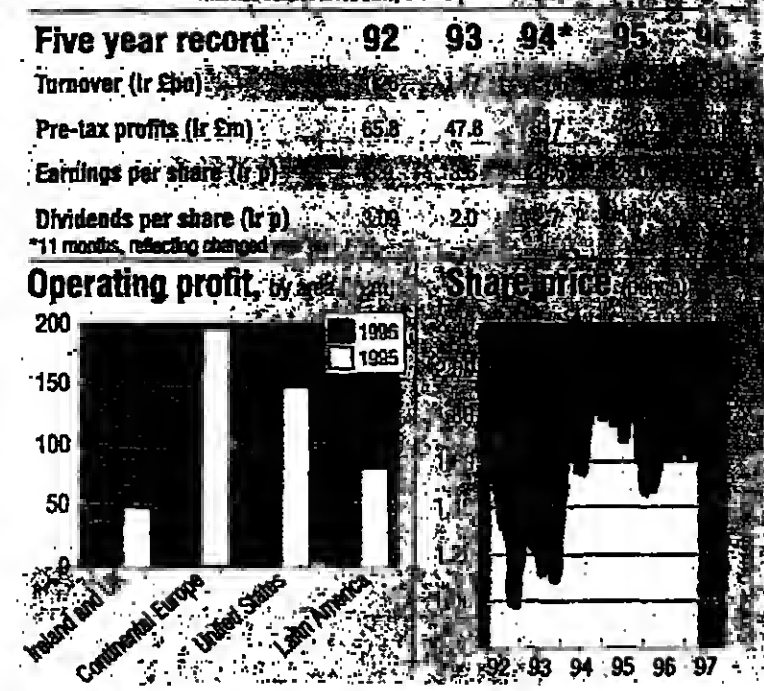
According to Highland's urbane chief executive, Brian Ivory, trading remains difficult, especially in the UK, where most of Famous Grouse's sales are made. Actually, the Grouse did extremely well against a still contracting home market, increasing sales volumes by 1 per cent in the six months to December, compared with a 6 per cent decline for Bell's and a 26 per cent collapse for Teacher's.

Single malt sales are enjoying good growth, but Highland suffered last year from its defiance of what Mr Ivory described as the "mid-winter madness" of his competitors, with price reductions of up to £5 a bottle on some rival Scotches.

On the basis of forecast profits this year of £45m, Highland's shares currently trade on a prospective price/earnings ratio of 16. Enjoy the product and leave the shares to others.

Jefferson Smurfit: At a glance

Market value: £1.68bn, share price 155.5p



INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL

LATEST RESULTS AND TOP 50 TEAMS

Top Fifty LEAGUE TABLE

CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 17 AUGUST - 30 MARCH

POS	NAME	TEAM	POINTS
1	MR PETER FRANKENTHAL	JOSI MARTI	848
2	MR ASHLEY BRETTE	RELEGATION 12	844
3	MR PAUL MATTHEW	THE DOOR MAT	844
4	MR SEAN BROSNAN	OASIS	843
5	MR SIMON LIU	DEFENCE ROVERS	832
6	MR IAN GROUT	SILK CITY	826
7	MR BEN KENDALL	TURKEY'S TIGERS	824
8	MR ALEXANDRA FEAST	THE ZOROSTRIAN ZENITH ZYNGE	824
9	MR KETH HARRY	ORGANIC MANURE FC	822
10	MR WILLIAM BARR	KRUGER FC	822
11	MR JOHN COX	SOUTHERN FC	821
12	MR RICK YAP	OUT OF MIND	820
13	MR GARRELD MAMES MACALEN	GARFIELD BOYS 2ND	818
14	MR ADAM HOGG	BLAGGY HOGS	817
15	MR PETER FRANKENTHAL	ARLENSIU	816
16	MR G WHITE	WHITE CITY	816
17	MR SCOTT MCINERNEY	NO TEAM NAME	815
18	MR GRAHAM LONGSDANE	SANDLING'S STROLLERS	815
19	MR SIMON DRAPER	PLATE FC	812
20	MR JONATHAN MCCROSSEN	WASH TOW ARMY	812
21	MR J GODWIN	NORWOOD	812
22	MR JOE GOODING	TEAM MUSHROOMS	812
23	MR D R MILLS	THE MUSHROOM LAYERS	809
24	MR ROBERT GREENFIELD	THE GULLS	809
25	MR GARY HAYLES	101 ALLSTARS	808
26	MR S J PERRY	THE GREAT ESCAPERS	807
27	MR IVAN HOOD	EAST GATE ROVERS	807
28	MR TONY AKINDALE	OLLIE VILLA	806
29	MR JOHN WAREING	4000 HOLES	805
30	MR A MORGAN	KICK START	804
31	MR TIM PAUL GERMAN	ATHLETICS ASETICO	804
32	MR P CURRAN	NO DETAILS	804
33	MR ANDREW BOLTON	ANDREW'S B TEAM	804
34	MR DARREN NICHOLAS	EDNA	803
35	MR PAUL FULLWOOD	KING OF HOBBIES FC	803
36	MR ANDY LANE	IF ANYONE CAN TOUCH	803
37	MR JOHN BRITTEL	FAKE MADRID	802
38	MR K B MALCOLM	INTER MALCOLM	802
39	MR A SWANNY	DOG'S BRICK	801
40	MR STEVE BAZZNOT	BAZZY'S DEFENCE	800
41	MR STEVE PAYNE	NO FUTURE IN FURRY	800
42	MR R PRINGLE	DEEPDALE VILLA 7	800
43	MR MARTIN BENNICK	WILD ROVERS	800
44	MR BEN ANDREWS	BOOZEY'S BATTLEERS	800
45	MR SIMON HERMANSEN	SIMON'S SUPER TEAM	800
46	MR MARK HAYDEN	TROWBRIDGE WANDERERS	800
47	MR TERRY JONES	ANDROGYN UNITED	799
48	MR PETER SHERLOCK	LINCOLN ST GILES	798
49	MR BILL COOPER	YEP MOP 2000	798

THE INDEPENDENT INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

Today we publish the latest results in our Independent Fantasy Football game, supported by Philips Energy Saver Light Bulbs.

The Team Market and Scores table published below, shows four scores. The Week 34 (Wk 34) column lists all points scored in Premiership matches played between Monday 31 March - Sunday 6 April inclusive. Column B lists all points scored before the transfer period. Column A lists all points scored after the transfer period. The Overall (Ov) column lists the total amount of points scored in all matches played from Saturday 17 August - Sunday 6 April. Also published today is the Top 50 League table (see left). It lists the overall top scoring Independent Fantasy Football managers and their teams for matches played between Saturday 17 August - Sunday 30 March.

Results will be published every Wednesday in The Independent for all games played during the previous Monday to Sunday inclusive. They will also appear the following Sunday, in the Independent.

SCORING SYSTEM
4 points for a goal ■ 4 points for a goalkeeper/defender clean sheet ■ 3 points for a successful assist ■ 1 point when a player is selected and plays ■ 1 point for a winning goal ■ 3 points for a manager win, 1 point for a draw ■ Lose 1 point for a yellow card ■ Lose 3 points for a red card

TEAM MARKET AND SCORES

OVERALL SCORE CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 17 AUGUST - 6 APRIL WEEK 34 SCORE CALCULATED ON MATCHES PLAYED FROM 31 MARCH - 6 APRIL

CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	POINTS	VALUE	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	POINTS	VALUE	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	POINTS	VALUE	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	POINTS	VALUE				
W34	B	A	Ov	(£m)	W34	B	A	Ov	(£m)	W34	B	A	Ov	(£m)	W34	B	A	Ov	(£m)				
GOALKEEPERS																							
300	Scorpan	ARS	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	649	Sturges	DER	15	12	27	12	836	Hughes	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
301	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	650	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	837	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
302	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	651	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	838	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
303	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	652	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	839	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
304	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	653	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	840	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
305	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	654	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	841	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
306	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	655	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	842	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
307	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	656	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	843	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
308	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	657	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	844	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
309	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	658	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	845	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
310	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	659	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	846	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
311	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	660	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	847	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
312	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	661	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	848	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
313	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	662	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	849	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
314	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	663	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	850	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
315	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	664	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	851	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
316	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	665	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	852	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
317	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	666	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	853	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
318	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	667	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	854	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
319	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	668	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	855	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
320	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	669	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	856	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
321	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	670	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	857	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
322	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	671	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	858	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
323	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	672	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	859	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
324	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	673	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	860	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
325	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	674	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	861	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
326	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	675	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	862	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
327	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	676	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	863	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
328	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	677	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	864	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
329	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	678	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	865	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
330	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	679	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	866	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
331	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	680	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	867	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
332	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	681	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	868	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
333	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	682	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	869	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
334	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	683	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	870	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
335	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	684	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	871	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
336	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	685	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	872	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
337	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	686	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	873	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
338	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	687	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	874	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
339	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	688	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	875	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
340	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	689	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	876	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
341	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	690	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	877	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
342	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	691	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	878	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
343	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	692	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	879	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
344	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	693	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	880	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
345	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	694	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	881	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
346	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	695	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	882	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
347	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	696	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	883	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
348	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	697	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	884	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
349	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	698	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	885	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
350	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	699	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	886	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
351	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	700	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	887	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
352	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	701	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	888	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
353	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	702	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	889	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
354	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	703	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	890	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
355	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	704	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	891	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
356	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	705	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	892	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
357	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	706	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	893	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
358	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	707	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	894	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
359	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	708	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	895	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
360	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	709	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	896	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
361	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	710	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	897	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
362	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	711	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	898	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
363	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	712	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	899	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
364	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	713	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	900	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
365	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	714	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	901	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
366	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	715	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	902	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
367	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	716	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	903	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
368	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	717	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30	22	904	Spencer	CHE	0	19	47	65	4.4
369	Bonich	BLA	5	38	15	33	33	3.0	718	Amorovic	WH	11	19	30</									

market report / shares

Data Bank

FTSE 100	4269.3	-2.4
FTSE 250	4518.7	+0.3
FTSE 350	2105.5	-0.9
SEAO VOLUME	790.1m shares	
	43,808 bargains	
GITS Index	93.60	-0.05



Sainsbury relegated to back shelf as Tesco delights

Taking Stock

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

stock market reporter of the year

As Tesco delighted the stock market with another confident profits performance the shares of its arch rival, J Sainsbury, suffered a humiliating cut-price session.

In brisk trading the superstore chain, which has been forced to cede its number one position to Tesco, fell 5p to 328p with, it is thought, two institutions taking the opportunity to unload. The shares have come down from 407p in August and were riding at 582p four years ago.

The other superstore leaders were in fine form. Tesco rose 11.5p to 364p, pulling Asda 4.5p higher to 112p and Sainsbury 4.5p to 369p.

Sainsbury, judged by Tesco's comments, is still trailing its arch-rival in the fierce superstore battle and the market's unease about its trading performance was compounded by rumours of problems at its Homebase operation.

BSkyB, the satellite television broadcaster, was another looking bruised. The shares fell 24p to 585.5p as it was thought the company's stockbroker lowered its profit estimates. BSZ was said to have cut this year's figures from £325m to £302m.

The market is also fretting about delays over decoder boxes and the Astra satellite. Anxiety about the awesome US debt mountain of the Rupert Murdoch empire is another unsettling influence. Mr Murdoch's need for cash has already prompted him in effect, to mortgage part of his BSkyB stake.

The rest of the market had another uneventful session with Footsie falling 2.4 points to 4,269.3.

Lassie did its best to disturb the lethargy. Confirmation it had discovered a gas field in Pakistan lifted the shares 11p to 234p. It was, however, an

other example of being better to travel than arrive. Rumours of the oil group's Pakistan success flowed around the market last month, sending the shares gushing to 258.5p.

British Steel had a difficult session. It was the busiest traded Footsie share, falling 7p to 152.5p. Profit downgrades, on the back of sterling's strength, did the damage. Merrill Lynch was one investment house to lower its estimate, cutting this year's forecast from £280m to £240m.

The continuing power of the pound took its toll elsewhere. Allied Domecq and Guinness weakened. Vickers also gave ground.

Health shares had a much more subdued session. High-fliers Drew Scientific and Telpel Life came nearer to earth with Drew off 13.5p to 134p, against 240p last week, and Telpel down 23p to 102.5p.

Williams, described as a "focused conglomerate" by Dresner Kleinwort Benson edged forward 2p to 317.5p. The securities house says the shares are cheap, assuming the bid for Chubb Security gets Whitehall clearance.

Laura Ashley, the retailer, had an intriguing run. The shares rose 13p to 144.5p on persistent buying with one investment house seemingly prepared to pick up all the stock

available. After hitting 219p in October the shares have fallen steadily and before the buying burst were bumping along at their lowest for a year.

Danka Business Systems put on 22.5p to 490p with Pamure Gordon support. The stockbroker believes the price could return to 600p.

Allied Colloids moved forward 5p to 129p after NatWest Securities said the chemical group was "in a stronger position today than at any point over the past six years and is much better placed to improve profits".

The sale of 34 million shares by Tom Trickett, one of the founders of holiday group Altours, was absorbed with the price moving ahead 3p to 943.5p. Mr Trickett retired from the company in 1994. He sold at 925p.

Coral Products, a plastics group, had the dubious distinction of providing the day's

profit warning; the shares fell 16p to 42.5p.

Rowlinson Securities, a building group, jumped 65p to 267.5p after disclosing talks were on which could produce a bid. Rumours the successful but low-profile business, had attracted a predator started to circulate earlier this year.

Brockbank, the Lloyds managing agent, gained 32.5p to 562.5p after Mid Ocean, a Bermuda-based reinsurer, moved further to gain full control. Mid Ocean already has 51 per cent. Oriel, an insurance broker which has been involved in takeover talks, jumped 11.5p to 112.5p.

Newcomers did well. United Overseas, placed at 50p, ended at 60p and Sibir Energy, an oil operation, traded at 15.5p from the 10p offer price.

Wedderburn, a property group which has moved into oil trading, returned at 30p. The shares were suspended at 24p.

IES, the electronic security group, has had a disappointing time since moving from Olex to AIM last summer. The shares arrived at 292p but have been down to 139p, moving ahead 10p to 170p yesterday. A deal with Asda, the superstore group, provided the uplift. IES integrated digital video system is to be installed at 27 Asda outlets; there is talk of other deals.

JBZW is providing an interesting election punt. It is offering a range of put and call Footsie warrants, expiring on 5 May. Minimum stake is 9,000 warrants.

Wiggins, the property group which has taken over Tomorrow's Leisure, was busily traded. In the past three months Seag volume of more than 300 million has been recorded. The shares held at 10p.

Alcoholic Beverages

Adnoca	100.00	100.00
Beck's	100.00	100.00
Carlsberg	100.00	100.00
Heineken	100.00	100.00
Interbrew	100.00	100.00
Kaiser	100.00	100.00
Miller	100.00	100.00
Orkla	100.00	100.00
Reckitt	100.00	100.00
Stout	100.00	100.00
Tennent	100.00	100.00
Watson	100.00	100.00

Banking

Barclays	100.00	100.00
Bank of Scotland	100.00	100.00
Bank of Ireland	100.00	100.00
Bank of Montreal	100.00	100.00
Bank of New York	100.00	100.00
Bank of Paris	100.00	100.00
Bank of Spain	100.00	100.00
Bank of Tokyo	100.00	100.00
Bank of West	100.00	100.00
Bank of America	100.00	100.00
Bank of China	100.00	100.00
Bank of India	100.00	100.00
Bank of Japan	100.00	100.00
Bank of Korea	100.00	100.00
Bank of Russia	100.00	100.00
Bank of South Africa	100.00	100.00
Bank of Sweden	100.00	100.00
Bank of Switzerland	100.00	100.00
Bank of Taiwan	100.00	100.00
Bank of Thailand	100.00	100.00
Bank of Vietnam	100.00	100.00
Bank of Yugoslavia	100.00	100.00

Banking

Bank of America	100.00	100.00
Bank of China	100.00	100.00
Bank of India	100.00	100.00
Bank of Japan	100.00	100.00
Bank of Korea	100.00	100.00
Bank of Russia	100.00	100.00
Bank of South Africa	100.00	100.00
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[illegible]**FINANCIAL TIMES**

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هكذا من الأصل

Norman casts off fear of formidable Faldo

The azzaleas have already come and gone - bad news for the television people, a welcome relief to hayfever sufferers - but Greg Norman, despite exhibiting all the signs of being allergic to Augusta National, is back for the 61st US Masters.

On the 10th anniversary of Larry Mize's chip in to beat him in a play-off, the Australian faces a return to the scene of his spectacular collapse a year ago, when he gave away 11 shots to Nick Faldo in the final round. "It feels different already," Norman said.

The image of victor and vanquished embracing on the 18th green remains vivid. "Everyone keeps saying 'I just want to give you a hug,'" Faldo said. "I felt for the guy. I didn't think words could express it." With one just over 40, the other approaching it, the 1996 Masters will remain a watershed in both their careers.

Faldo said at the time that he knew that fateful day would be remembered for Norman's disastrous 78, but hoped that his 67 would be recognised for what it was, one of the best closing rounds to win a major championship. "I am more than happy with the credit I have been given," Faldo said. "The

Andy Farrell, in Augusta, finds the golfing golliaths who so memorably contested last year's Masters finale in buoyant mood for the 61st version

way everything unfolded, the drama, the atmosphere, playing the course as it intended to play it, that's as good as I've done. The response was enormous."

But not as huge as Norman received. The faxes and letters poured into his Florida office. "You did more for golf in defeat than you have done in victory," George Bush wrote. "Been there, done that!" said Scott Hoch, who lost to Faldo in '89. "Remember, the tallest trees gather the most wind," Gary Player penned.

The outpouring of support for the three months afterwards, and in the three months up to this week, has changed my approach to people," Norman said. "But I've become tougher on myself. I am surprised that I survived the year the way I pushed myself in practice, in the office and in the gym. I woke up the Tuesday after the Masters hung over like hell, but by lunchtime I was fine."

While Faldo has re-immersed himself in golf following the upheaval of his divorce from his second wife, Gill, and setting up his own management company away from the International

Management Group, Norman threw himself into everything. Having sold his stake in equipment company Cobra for \$400m (£25), he has invested in a turf farm which provides grasses for baseball and football fields as well as golf courses.

There is his golf course design work, a chain of restaurants that will open this summer and a clothing company that is rapidly expanding into non-golfing lines. He met the US President, Bill Clinton, in Australia and the two have become friends, which led to Clinton's recent high-profile ascent outside Norman's home.

When Norman reassesses his career in the year 2000, golf may not be top of the list. There were times, he admits, that he has not enjoyed playing over the last year. He sacked Butch Harmon as coach and later turned to David Leadbetter. Faldo says it is not a problem; Leadbetter says that he will be on a beach in Bermuda if the two met head-to-head again as last year. "I treated it like a business decision," Norman said. "I went for the best available."

Likewise, on Monday, he met Tony Robbins, a motiva-

tional speaker who has worked with Clinton, businessmen and the US Army as well as sports stars. "It was a re-education," Norman said. "There was not anything I have not done in the past, but you forget to do things. To be good to yourself as well as to be tough on yourself."

In a reverse of last year, Norman is a little off his game while Faldo, winner at Riviera six weeks ago, believes he is ready. Both watched old videos last week to correct their eye position while putting. Faldo also got the greenkeeper at Lake Nona to shave down the putting green to Augusta speed, and played out rounds at the National on the practice range.

The two are joint favourites but Norman, the two-time Open champion, is not out for one on one with the Englishman who has six majors and craves more. "I don't care who I face. I just want to be in position. Winning the Masters would mean another trophy on the mantelpiece, it would fulfil a dream, but it would not change my life. I know I am going to be burned again, but if you do it your way, you can accept that. I can accept that I created this story that has run for 52 years, but now I want to create other stories."

As he left the press conference, he added: "Is the story over now?" This may only be the beginning.



Augusta embrace: A victorious Nick Faldo (facing) consoles a vanquished Greg Norman after the Australian's disastrous final 78 in last year's US Masters. Photograph: Reuters

Dunlop holds off debutants

The Flat season started in earnest in the Lowdown Maiden Stakes at Nottingham yesterday. Henry Cecil had his first runner, ridden by his new stable jockey, Kieren Fallon, David Loder likewise took the plunge, and Walter Swinburn had his first ride of the year. But all were upstaged by Ed

RICHARD EDMONDSON
NAP: Lucky Archer
(Ludlow 5.20)
NB: The Lambton Worm (Ripon 3.10)

Dunlop and his new apprentice Daragh O'Donoghue, who took the honours with Latalomne, a half-brother to the Breeders' Cup Sprint winner, Sheikh Albadou. Latalomne won by two lengths from Shawin, the Loder-trained odds-on favourite, with Shaheen, the Cecil-Fallon representative, third. Swinburn got just a blow in the leaders on Spy Knoll and finished 13th.

RESULTS

NOTTINGHAM
2.00: 1. RASCALLO (F) 12.2 sec. 2. Sallan The Kidney 11.2 sec. 3. Puckler 10.1 sec. 4. 1.4 sec. 5. 1.4 sec. 6. 1.4 sec. 7. 1.4 sec. 8. 1.4 sec. 9. 1.4 sec. 10. 1.4 sec. 11. 1.4 sec. 12. 1.4 sec. 13. 1.4 sec. 14. 1.4 sec. 15. 1.4 sec. 16. 1.4 sec. 17. 1.4 sec. 18. 1.4 sec. 19. 1.4 sec. 20. 1.4 sec. 21. 1.4 sec. 22. 1.4 sec. 23. 1.4 sec. 24. 1.4 sec. 25. 1.4 sec. 26. 1.4 sec. 27. 1.4 sec. 28. 1.4 sec. 29. 1.4 sec. 30. 1.4 sec. 31. 1.4 sec. 32. 1.4 sec. 33. 1.4 sec. 34. 1.4 sec. 35. 1.4 sec. 36. 1.4 sec. 37. 1.4 sec. 38. 1.4 sec. 39. 1.4 sec. 40. 1.4 sec. 41. 1.4 sec. 42. 1.4 sec. 43. 1.4 sec. 44. 1.4 sec. 45. 1.4 sec. 46. 1.4 sec. 47. 1.4 sec. 48. 1.4 sec. 49. 1.4 sec. 50. 1.4 sec. 51. 1.4 sec. 52. 1.4 sec. 53. 1.4 sec. 54. 1.4 sec. 55. 1.4 sec. 56. 1.4 sec. 57. 1.4 sec. 58. 1.4 sec. 59. 1.4 sec. 60. 1.4 sec. 61. 1.4 sec. 62. 1.4 sec. 63. 1.4 sec. 64. 1.4 sec. 65. 1.4 sec. 66. 1.4 sec. 67. 1.4 sec. 68. 1.4 sec. 69. 1.4 sec. 70. 1.4 sec. 71. 1.4 sec. 72. 1.4 sec. 73. 1.4 sec. 74. 1.4 sec. 75. 1.4 sec. 76. 1.4 sec. 77. 1.4 sec. 78. 1.4 sec. 79. 1.4 sec. 80. 1.4 sec. 81. 1.4 sec. 82. 1.4 sec. 83. 1.4 sec. 84. 1.4 sec. 85. 1.4 sec. 86. 1.4 sec. 87. 1.4 sec. 88. 1.4 sec. 89. 1.4 sec. 90. 1.4 sec. 91. 1.4 sec. 92. 1.4 sec. 93. 1.4 sec. 94. 1.4 sec. 95. 1.4 sec. 96. 1.4 sec. 97. 1.4 sec. 98. 1.4 sec. 99. 1.4 sec. 100. 1.4 sec. 101. 1.4 sec. 102. 1.4 sec. 103. 1.4 sec. 104. 1.4 sec. 105. 1.4 sec. 106. 1.4 sec. 107. 1.4 sec. 108. 1.4 sec. 109. 1.4 sec. 110. 1.4 sec. 111. 1.4 sec. 112. 1.4 sec. 113. 1.4 sec. 114. 1.4 sec. 115. 1.4 sec. 116. 1.4 sec. 117. 1.4 sec. 118. 1.4 sec. 119. 1.4 sec. 120. 1.4 sec. 121. 1.4 sec. 122. 1.4 sec. 123. 1.4 sec. 124. 1.4 sec. 125. 1.4 sec. 126. 1.4 sec. 127. 1.4 sec. 128. 1.4 sec. 129. 1.4 sec. 130. 1.4 sec. 131. 1.4 sec. 132. 1.4 sec. 133. 1.4 sec. 134. 1.4 sec. 135. 1.4 sec. 136. 1.4 sec. 137. 1.4 sec. 138. 1.4 sec. 139. 1.4 sec. 140. 1.4 sec. 141. 1.4 sec. 142. 1.4 sec. 143. 1.4 sec. 144. 1.4 sec. 145. 1.4 sec. 146. 1.4 sec. 147. 1.4 sec. 148. 1.4 sec. 149. 1.4 sec. 150. 1.4 sec. 151. 1.4 sec. 152. 1.4 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1.4 sec. 296. 1.4 sec. 297. 1.4 sec. 298. 1.4 sec. 299. 1.4 sec. 300. 1.4 sec. 301. 1.4 sec. 302. 1.4 sec. 303. 1.4 sec. 304. 1.4 sec. 305. 1.4 sec. 306. 1.4 sec. 307. 1.4 sec. 308. 1.4 sec. 309. 1.4 sec. 310. 1.4 sec. 311. 1.4 sec. 312. 1.4 sec. 313. 1.4 sec. 314. 1.4 sec. 315. 1.4 sec. 316. 1.4 sec. 317. 1.4 sec. 318. 1.4 sec. 319. 1.4 sec. 320. 1.4 sec. 321. 1.4 sec. 322. 1.4 sec. 323. 1.4 sec. 324. 1.4 sec. 325. 1.4 sec. 326. 1.4 sec. 327. 1.4 sec. 328. 1.4 sec. 329. 1.4 sec. 330. 1.4 sec. 331. 1.4 sec. 332. 1.4 sec. 333. 1.4 sec. 334. 1.4 sec. 335. 1.4 sec. 336. 1.4 sec. 337. 1.4 sec. 338. 1.4 sec. 339. 1.4 sec. 340. 1.4 sec. 341. 1.4 sec. 342. 1.4 sec. 343. 1.4 sec. 344. 1.4 sec. 345. 1.4 sec. 346. 1.4 sec. 347. 1.4 sec. 348. 1.4 sec. 349. 1.4 sec. 350. 1.4 sec. 351. 1.4 sec. 352. 1.4 sec. 353. 1.4 sec. 354. 1.4 sec. 355. 1.4 sec. 356. 1.4 sec. 357. 1.4 sec. 358. 1.4 sec. 359. 1.4 sec. 360. 1.4 sec. 361. 1.4 sec. 362. 1.4 sec. 363. 1.4 sec. 364. 1.4 sec. 365. 1.4 sec. 366. 1.4 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FA CUP COUNTDOWN: Chesterfield boast a rich tradition in goalkeepers but the present incumbent will venture into uncharted territory when he plays in Sunday's FA Cup semi-final. Phil Shaw talked to Billy Mercer, and (below) presents a brief history of the club's custodians

Mercer aspires to keep the faith

The greatest in Chesterfield's long line of fine goalkeepers, Gordon Banks, ended his career with a winner's medal in the World Cup but not the FA Cup. The latest, Billy Mercer, feels embarrassed to be mentioned in the same breath, yet he could finish the season with the prize that eluded a legend.

Mercer's trophy cabinet offers a true measure of Chesterfield's achievement in reaching the FA Cup semi-final, as well as the status for which the Second Division club are playing against Middlesbrough next Sunday. The solitary item on display was awarded for being an unused substitute in a glorified friendly called the Steel City Challenge. It is a loser's medal.

Not that the 27-year-old Merseysider is acquainted solely with the unglamorous end of the spectrum. Having started late as a keeper at the age of 14 - "No one else would go in goal at school," he explains - Mercer recovered from the blow of being released from Everton's YTS programme to earn a contract with Liverpool.

Suddenly the self-confessed Kopite and trainee metal worker was working daily with Messrs Dalglish, Rush and Hansen. When Bruce Grobbelaar was injured and Mike Hooper took over he played 30 reserve games, while a loan to Rotherham brought League experience at 19.

"I was assured there was no way they'd let me go," Mercer recalls, "but when I came back Kenny Dalglish told me the club had agreed a fee. I was struggling to hold back the tears in his office, though with hindsight my career would probably have stalled if I'd stayed."

After five years a knee injury had cost Mercer his place when Dave Bassett rang asking him to join Sheffield United's tour of Australia. "I thought it was the Rotherham lads pulling my leg. I was going 'Yeah, sure', but it was for real and I signed when we got back."

"The trouble was that I couldn't displace Alan Kelly, who's easily the



Billy Mercer, Chesterfield's determinedly unflashy goalkeeper, prepares for Sunday's FA Cup semi-final against Middlesbrough. "We really fancy ourselves in a one-off match"

Photograph: Peter Jay

best keeper I've worked with, and in my last three months there I went on loan to Nottingham Forest."

An eight-game stint as cover for Mark Crossley culminated in a visit to Wimbledon. "It looked as if Frank Clark was going to put me on when Mark got a whack on

the head, but it never happened."

So to Chesterfield, which is to goalkeepers what Newcastle is to centre-forwards. Mercer did not realise the richness of the legacy until their Cup run. Then, between the sweet defeat of Forest, when he skipped the side, and the quarter-final wrangle

with Wrexham, Saltergate welcomed its most distinguished old boy.

Banks could not believe the size of Mercer (6ft 2in) compared with the custodians of his day. In one respect, however, his successor is a throwback to the 1960s. His distaste for the multi-coloured leisurewear

that currently passes for kit prompts him to sport a plain green sweater. "I even cut the collar off. It's only a game after all, and I'm not a flash keeper."

Not flash? After coming under the wing of the classic eccentric? "You've got to remember I also

worked with Alan [Kelly], who's the complete opposite to Bruce. He's a textbook keeper and that's how I'd like to be."

"I've got great respect for Bruce. It takes a lot to perform consistently well at the highest level, where every error is magnified. The most

important thing about goalkeeping is to forget your mistakes, which the top guys are never allowed to."

"I'd love to have Bruce's confidence, but I think everyone would have a heart attack if I played like him! I met him again when we played at Plymouth, and when we came here we were about the only ones not involved in the famous punch-up. He was spunko on the ground and I was up the far end."

Mercer, who has kept 20 clean sheets this season, acknowledges that Sunday is more than "just a game". Old Trafford is one of a handful of grounds he has never visited, but there will be one familiar face among Middlesbrough's exotic talents. Craig Hignett was a colleague in Liverpool's second string; their families have even holidayed together.

"We know Juninho and Ravanelli are world-class attackers, but they've also got weaknesses we can exploit. We really fancy ourselves in a one-off match. I keep reading how they think they got the best draw possible, but we're going to chase them all over that pitch. They won't enjoy that."

From the crooked spire to the twin towers would be the ultimate Cup romance. Billy Mercer has projected even further ahead. Chesterfield against Liverpool in the Cup-Winners' Cup, with dreams and aspirations like that, who needs a cupboard full of medals?

A CENTURY IN SAFE HANDS: CHESTERFIELD'S WEIRD AND WONDERFUL GOALKEEPERS

GORDON BANKS

Born Sheffield, 1937. The man who became "Banks of England" and Pele's nemesis was spotted playing for Millers of Steelworks and Rawmarsh Welfare. Signed by the Spiritues on a wage of £3.7 a week when he finished National Service. His reputation grew during Chesterfield's run to 1956 FA Youth Cup final, a 4-3 defeat by Manchester United. Sold to Leicester for £7,000 after 26 games, later to gain a World Cup winner's medal alongside the Eusebio who scored against him 10 years earlier, Bobby Charlton.

JIM BROWN

Born Lancashire, 1952. A Chesterfield rarity - a keeper they bought, and twice at that - Brown first arrived from Albion Rovers in 1972. Capped once by Scotland after leaving for Sheffield United. Playing for

Washington Diplomats alongside Johan Cruyff he became the first keeper to score in the North American Soccer League. Repeated the feat from 90 yards against Stockport on returning to Saltergate, where he is now commercial manager. Substitute in 1995 play-off final win at Wembley - aged 43.

CHARLIE MONTYAN

Born Chesterfield c.1865. Died 1922. Ironically, Saltergate's first goalkeeper legend owes his status to being on receiving end of Preston's record 26-0 rout of Hyde in the FA Cup of 1887, though he reportedly performed heroically. On joining Chesterfield in 1892 he combined playing with running a nearby pub, and gained further notoriety for Späthel-like attacking forays. Sacked after conceding a goal while still upfield, he later helped organise the 1912 Stockholm Olympics and

coached in Belgium, where he died.

SAM HARDY

Born Chesterfield, 1883. Died 1966. Recruited by the Spiritues from local team Newbold White Star, Hardy conceded six against Liverpool in 1905 but performed so defiantly that he was promptly bought by the Anfield club for the then-substantial sum of £500. His style was unspectacular but he eventually gained 21 England caps - spread over 13 years - as well as making 550 League appearances and earning FA Cup winner's medals with Aston Villa in 1913 and 20. Owned a hotel in Chesterfield after retiring.

RAY MIDDLETON

Born Co Durham, 1919. Died 1977. When still combining goalkeeping with his job as a miner, Middleton insured his hands for £2,000. Joined

Chesterfield from Washington Church and made 250 appearances either side of the war, while running a grocer's shop and being involved in the town's Labour party. Won four England B caps, and later became the only player to be



Banks: The greatest of them all. Pele's nemesis and World Cup winner

Justice. In 1966, the club's first great FA Cup run, he was in the team that reached the fifth round by beating Middlesbrough.

STEVE GORZOVIC

Born Maribor, 1957. Hardy established with the Spiritues (16 games) before Liverpool whisked him away for £75,000 in 1977 as cover for Ray Clemence. The ex-Notts goalkeeper (and colleague of ice-slayer Christopher Dean) gained European Cup experience as used in four appearances. In

1981, he was sold to West Bromwich Albion for £10,000. In 1987, he left for the FA Cup final, where he played for Everton against Liverpool.

After having a plastic joint inserted in a damaged finger, he later worked as a commercial manager. He has since returned to the club, where he is now a coach.

ALAN KELLY

Born Northampton, 1958. A former Everton and Liverpool goalkeeper, Kelly played for Chesterfield in 1981 and 1982. He was known for his solid and reliable performances.

After having a plastic joint inserted in a damaged finger, he later worked as a commercial manager. He has since returned to the club, where he is now a coach.

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JOHN OSBORNE

Born Northampton, 1958. A former Everton and Liverpool goalkeeper, Kelly played for Chesterfield in 1981 and 1982. He was known for his solid and reliable performances.

'Furious' Ravanelli advised to keep his counsel

Middlesbrough's Italian international Fabrizio Ravanelli intends to "pay himself" from speaking in the English written press after a report that he is "too tired" to play against West Ham in tonight's Premiership relegation battle at West Ham.

Ravanelli, who has decided to delay an operation on his troubled Achilles tendon until the end of the season, is furious over the story in a leading tabloid newspaper which he believes gives the impression that he is not fully committed to Boro's cause. And he has "re-

luctantly" taken the advice of his agent, Finn Pagliara, to ban all interviews in future apart from on television or radio.

"In fact," said Pagliara, who was also responsible for helping to bring other foreign players like Emerson, Gianluca Festa and Vladimir Kinder to Middlesbrough, "we are also reluctantly considering whether to stop speaking to the Italian newspapers as well."

"They always report faithfully what Fabrizio says to them, but then some journalists read it in

this country and interpret things a different way. It means that the supporters of Middlesbrough are continually being given the wrong message and Fabrizio is sick and tired of it happening."

"The truth is that he is fully committed to Middlesbrough, of course he is. Some people insist on suggesting, whenever the opportunity arises, that he will leave at the end of the season because he doesn't like what he has found in England."

"But I can tell you he loves the game here and already I am

trying to negotiate an extension of his three-year contract. The same is true of Emerson. He has some early problems but he is very settled now. But I am afraid that some people do not want to write the truth because it does not make a sensational story. Surely a good journalist wants to write only the truth?"

Pagliara, however, does not deny that Ravanelli is doubtful for tonight's match. The agent said: "Of course he is tired after playing 120 minutes in a cup final for his first game back af-

ter having a hamstring injury. "What we have to consider is whether Fabrizio goes out against West Ham at maybe 50 per cent or rests and makes sure he is 100 per cent for the FA Cup semi-final against Chesterfield on Sunday and the Coca-Cola Cup final replay the following Wednesday."

The Middlesbrough manager, Bryan Robson, will speak to his 27-goal striker today before deciding whether the former Juventus player is in the right shape to be included in his line-up at Upton Park.

Brighton to pursue lost points

Brighton are to challenge the Football Association over the two-point deduction they made after a pitch invasion at the club's home game against Lincoln on 1 October.

The Seagulls, five points adrift at the bottom of the Third Division, have issued instructions to solicitors to start proceedings. In a statement, the directors say the punishment was, and remains, unfair. The club will take action through arbitration under the FA's rules or take the FA to court.

Brighton were docked the

points in December, having gone into this season with a three-point suspended sentence hanging over them following the riot which caused the home match against York City to be abandoned last April.

The Lincoln match was held up for 15 minutes during the first half when home fans invaded the pitch in a peaceful protest against the club's directors.

The club's appeal against the sentence was turned down in February, but Brighton's chief executive, David Bellotti, then made it clear Albion would

seek to pursue the matter if at all possible.

Albion said that while spectators came on to the pitch, their argument was that they had the full numbers of police and stewards according to the safety certificate, and that the peaceful demonstration was well handled.

Meanwhile, the consortium set to take control of Brighton have promised fans that the deal will go through whether or not the club is relegated from the Football League at the end of the season.

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FA Cup Premier League	
1 Arsenal v Leicester	26 Watford v Luton
2 Blackburn v Manchester Utd	27 Watford v York
3 Derby v Aston Villa	28 Reading v Brentford
4 Everton v Tottenham	
5 Southampton v West Ham	
Saturday (last on compact): Sheffield Wednesday v Newcastle; Sunderland v Liverpool; FA Cup semi-final: Middlesbrough v Chesterfield (at Old Trafford); Wimbledon v Chelsea (at Wembley)	
Nationwide Football League	
First Division	
6 Barnsley v Charlton	21 Reading v Colchester
7 Birmingham v Huddersfield	22 Reading v Colchester
8 Bolton v Oxford Utd	23 Reading v Colchester
9 Norwich v Stoke	24 Reading v Colchester
10 Port Vale v Oldham	25 Reading v Colchester
11 Rotherham v Watford	
12 Queens Park Rangers v QPR	
13 Reading v Wolves	
14 Southend v Bradford City	
15 Swindon v Ipswich	
16 West Bromwich v Manchester City	
Also playing - not on compact: Sheffield Utd v Crystal Palace	
Second Division	
17 Blackpool v Bury	32 Reading v Colchester
18 Burnham v Gillingham	33 Reading v Colchester
19 Crewe v Bristol Rovers	34 Reading v Colchester
20 Luton v Plymouth	35 Reading v Colchester
21 Notts County v Wycombe	36 Reading v Colchester
22 Peterborough v Preston	37 Reading v Colchester
23 Shrewsbury v Wrexham	38 Reading v Colchester
24 Stockport v Bury	39 Reading v Colchester
Third Division	
25 Watford v Luton	40 Reading v Colchester
26 Watford v York	41 Reading v Colchester
27 Watford v Reading	42 Reading v Colchester
28 Reading v Brentford	43 Reading v Colchester
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Ajax prepared for revenge

European Cup

Juventus appear well placed for a repeat victory when they take on Ajax, last season's runners-up, in the semi-finals, with the first leg in Amsterdam today.

Last week the Dutch side's Finnish international, Jari Litmanen, called Juventus the best club side in the world. He said they appeared even stronger than last year, when they beat the Dutch in penalties in the final. At the weekend Juve appeared to prove him right with a 6-1 demolition of Italian champions, Milan, in Serie A.

Ajax, the 1995 European champions, are running into some form after a stuttering start to the season. Since the winter break they are unbeaten in Europe and have a 100 per cent record in the Dutch league.

Their coach, Louis van Gaal,

is upbeat about his side's prospects and believes Ajax are a much fresher and sharper outfit than the one that lost in last year's final. "If there is one team in the world that can beat Juventus, then it is us," he said.

The Turin team's only problem is the fitness of the Croat Alen Boksic, who has a muscle strain. However, the return of the Frenchman, Didier Deschamps, should be adequate compensation. The Juventus coach, Marcello Lippi, was expected to confirm a front line of Nicola Amoruso and Christian Vieri.

Ajax seem set to field largely the team that came back to win a thrilling quarter-final second leg away to Atletico Madrid with Patrick Kluyvert, suspended for the match in Spain, now sidelined by injury.

The Dutch international striker has a knee injury that he suffered during the 1-0 World

Cup qualifying match defeat in Turkey. It has shown no signs of improvement and he faces an operation on the day of the match. Ajax expect Kluyvert to be out for about a month, so he seems bound to miss the return leg in Italy. Indeed, Kluyvert, who is bound for Milan at the end of the season, may opt to play for Ajax again.

Defender Danny Blind, midfielder Marc Overmars and striker Nordin Wooter are all carrying slight injuries but are likely to play. More doubtful is defender Mario Melchiot who saw an eye specialist on Monday. Ajax's joint top scorer, Dani, who netted a sensational extra-time goal in Madrid, is unlikely to start the match.

Ajax Van de Ven, Michiel, Blind, F de Boer, Edgar, Schuster, Wouters, Lammers, Berengio, R de Boer, Overmars.

Juventus Peruzzi, Pizzini, Ferrara, Montoro, Milani, Di Livio, Deschamps, Seiden, Augusto, Vieri, Amoruso.

امكننا من الامل

Johnson is not so much a physical statement as a walking provocation

The Lions party have had mixed notices. On the whole they have been bad rather than good. The main criticisms have been that the squad lacks reliable kickers (both line and goal-kickers) and that Martin Johnson is something of a gamble as captain.

Two weeks ago I picked my own party. There was no attempt to forecast the selection that was to be made by Fran Cotton, Ian McGeechan and Jim Telfer. In the official party, in come John Bentley, Nick Ball, Will Greenwood, Paul Grayson, Matt Dawson, David Young, Peter Clough, Tom Smith, Barry Williams, Dodi Weir and Neil Back.

I replace, from my party, Jim Staples, Jon Sleightholme, Denis Hickie, Mike Cant, Jonathan Davies, Gary Armstrong, John

Davies, Darren Garforth, Richard Cockerill, Craig Quinell and Colin Charvis.

The comparison cannot be exact because Cotton and his colleagues are filling the positions slightly differently. They are taking 16 backs and 19 forwards to my respective allocations of 17 and 18. I also want three full-backs and three outside-halfs. They are taking two in both these positions, with Alan Tait dubbed a "utility back". Why, I should like to know, is Tait considered more of a utility back than Gregor Townsend, who can play both centre and outside-half, or Beal, who has played much of his rugby as a full-back rather than as a wing, the position in which he has been selected?

This brings me to the Northampton question. Grayson was in my party as a replacement for Neil Jenkins if the latter's broken arm failed to mend in time. But as Jenkins is fit enough to make the trip, there is surely a stronger case for taking Jonathan Davies or Catt, or preferably both of them.

Beal is a very lucky young man to be chosen before Aled Jones, Aled Jones, Sleightholme, Hickie or Ken Logan, to name but a few. Dawood is even luckier to be preferred to Brian Rafter, Kieran Bracken or Andy Gomersall (for it is doubtful whether his own third scrum-half, Armstrong, would have wanted to make the expedition). For sheer favoritism, there has been nothing like it since the Newport threequarters David

Burcher and Gareth Evans were chosen to go to New Zealand with the 1977 Lions.

I feel happier about the forwards. Here Cotton and friends have shown some imagination. The choice of Williams is one example.

I am sorry that Garforth is not in the squad but pleased that Clough is included. I did not even realise he was available. Whether he will frighten Brother Boer as much as he evidently does the gentler inhabitants of these islands is another question entirely.

Indeed, there must be doubts about Cotton's entire policy of, in the late Carwyn James phrase, getting his retaliation in first - or the more so because he has trumpeted his intentions ostentatiously in advance. It is not wise to announce your plan of action. It is even less wise to appear to be making physical threats against your opponents. A period of silence on Cotton's part would now be welcome.

However, as he is putting such a

premium on physique, it is curious that he has not been able to find room for Craig Quinell and Charvis. Quinell, though in the original squad of 62, was always an outside chance on account of his deficiencies in the lineout. But Charvis, who was not among the preliminary group, had done enough for Wales to make a reasonable case for himself.

In the event Cotton has not taken someone like Ben Clarke, but Neil Back, who is too small to command himself to Jack Rowell. To be fair to Rowell, Back has tended to disappear on those few occasions when he has been given an international chance. But I think he will frighten the referees more than he will the South African players. It has also been said that by

choosing Johnson as captain, Cotton is "making a statement" about the physical approach of the team. Again, I do not think this is wise, not only for the reason I have already given but because a lineout forward has, or ought to have, other things on his mind than tactical considerations. Johnson himself is not so much a physical statement as a walking provocation. I mean Evans who is still - alas! - the best wing in the four home nations, would be a much better choice.

For once, however, the centres are of high quality. Indeed, the five of them (including Tait) are stronger than the contingent that went to South Africa in 1974. But I doubt whether this superiority will prove enough to pull off the series.



ALAN WATKINS

Burcher and Gareth Evans were chosen to go to New Zealand with the 1977 Lions.

London Marathon on security alert

Athletics
MIKE ROWBOTTOM

Organisers of Sunday's Flora London Marathon yesterday promised high levels of vigilance after the IRA's disruption of the Grand National. But Nick Bittel, the event's chief executive, accepted the race was vulnerable to terrorist intervention given the numbers of people involved.

"We take the safety and security of runners and spectators extremely seriously," Bittel said. "We are not going to discuss specific security arrangements for the event. But having an event that is held on public roads over 26.2 miles does mean that you cannot absolutely secure the whole of the course."

"All you can do is take security measures to an appropriate level, and that is what we are doing. We must not forget that some £11m will be raised next Sunday for charities around the world. It would be a criminal disgrace for anybody to target it. It must be a possibility, however, in the light of what has just happened at Aintree."

"Since the cancellation of the IRA ceasefire we have taken as many security measures as we consider necessary and worked closely in conjunction with the police and other agencies to ensure the security of the event."

"We have never believed - I suspect like the National - that we might be a target, but we realise we run through what must be areas of concern to the police. You just have to think of some of the landmarks we run past. Among these, of course, will be Docklands, the target of an IRA bomb of last year."

Next Sunday will present police and transport authorities in the capital with a nightmarish challenge. Apart from the London Marathon, which is expected to attract a record number of 28,000 competitors and up to half a million spectators, there will also be the FA Cup semi-final between Wimbledon and Chelsea at Highbury, which will kick off at 12.00.

Bittel confirmed that the Football Association did not consult the Marathon organisers before fixing the time of the match. "No doubt football fans would have

preferred not to travel across London at the same time as half a million people were stuck on the course," he said.

To add to the complexity of Sunday, an Asian arts festival in Southall is expected to draw around 100,000 people, many of whom will be arriving in London on the day.

Meanwhile the marathon has lost one of the main British competitors in the men's race, Peter Whitehead. The Leeds runner, fourth in the 1995 World Championships, dropped out on Monday after suffering a back injury during a training run.

Yakov Tolstikov, the Russian who won the event in 1991 and was the fourth fastest entrant this year, has also dropped out, having chosen to run the Paris Marathon instead.

The favourite for the men's race, according to William Hill yesterday, was the Mexican Antonio Pinto, at 7-4, followed by Britain's Paul Evans at 5-2. Evans was also 7-4 on favourite to finish the top Briton, ahead of Richard Nerurkar, Gary Staines and the 1993 winner, Eamonn Martin.



Michael Di Venuto, the Australian batsman, cuts Shaun Pollock of South Africa during yesterday's one-day international in Johannesburg. Photograph: Allsport

Scotland have to fight battle on two fronts

Scotland are on tenterhooks after their ICC Trophy semi-final against Bangladesh was carried over to a second day.

The Scots were set a daunting target of 244 from their 50 overs today after yet another rain-interrupted day's play in Kuala Lumpur.

Alex Ritchie, the general manager of the Scottish Cricket Union, said: "It is a substantial total but it can be done. You expect good scores at this stage of the tournament and although it's a hard target it is achievable."

The Scots need Malaysian weather to co-operate. Under tournament rules, if the match was abandoned Bangladesh

Ambrose joins West Indies' exclusive club

Cricket
TONY COZIER

reports from St John's, Antigua
West Indies 333
India 50-0

The unseasonal weather that eliminated the first three days of the fourth Test dashed fervent Antigua expectations that one of their favourite sons, Curtly Ambrose, would claim the five wickets he needed to pass the landmark of 300 in Test cricket. At least on the final day yesterday they had the satisfaction of seeing the beanie fast bowler score the runs that took him past 1,000 in Tests.

The West Indies, hating without Franklin Rose, down with flu, were all out for 333 just before lunch and three-quarters of an hour after the interval India were 50 without loss.

When he puts his mind to it, which has been all too rare during his lengthy career, Ambrose is a reputable, if unorthodox, lower order left-hander good enough to have once scored 53 on a difficult pitch in a Test against Australia.

Towards the end of the recent series in Australia, and now against India, he has shown renewed enthusiasm for the game, bowling with much of his old time menace and also batting with responsibility. His 37 and unbeaten 18 in the third Test in Barbados were significant adjuncts to his bowling in achieving a narrow West Indies victory.

When he came to the wicket at the start yesterday, the West Indies were 252 for 7 and India could feel satisfied with their performance on the previous day, in spite of Brian Lara's 103. Ambrose, in partnership with wicketkeeper Courtney Browne, ensured that the balance tilted by batting through the first hour without bother.

When he swept the left-arm spinner Sunil Joshi for four after 20 minutes he had raised the seven runs required to carry him to his thousand in his 69th Test. Only Sir Garry Sobers and Malcolm Marshall among West Indians have done the double of 100 wickets and 1,000 runs in Tests. Ambrose, obviously, will never be classed in such an eminent all-round category but it is an achievement all the same.

He had made 22 when he was caught down the leg side by wicketkeeper Nayan Mongia, pulling at Abey Kuruvilla with the second new ball. Suitably inspired, the captain, Courtney Walsh, also played with rare confidence and flourish in making 21, adding 38 for the last wicket with Browne whose unbeaten 39 was his highest Test score.

Even though there was nothing in the match Ambrose and Ian Bishop then charged in and bowled an opening spell on either side of lunch with genuine speed and hostility. Twice Bishop might have had a wicket, but Roland Holder at short leg missed a sharp chance off Ajay Jadhava in the third over and the umpire B C Cooray failed to give a leg-side catch by the wicketkeeper when Venkata Laxman was 17.

Funnell to miss Windsor

Equestrianism
GENEVIEVE MURPHY

Giles Rowsell is expecting a huge number of entries for the Windsor International Horse Trials, which run from 22 to 25 May, but they will not include Pippa Funnell, the winner of the International section for the last two years. She has a suitable horse on which to aim for a hat-trick.

Rowsell, director of the event, anticipates a knock-on effect from the record entry at Badminton two weeks earlier. Those unable to start at Badminton will be looking towards Ireland, and the following week's Punchestown Three-Day Event.

That will probably lead to an overflow at Punchestown which would, in turn, increase the numbers wanting to run at Windsor a week later.

Fortunately the Windsor fixture includes three dressage arenas in operation it can accommodate around 170 horses, as distinct from Badminton's 80.

The leading riders see Windsor as a stepping-stone for their younger horses - as the Princess Royal, president of the event, wishes them to do. "With an Olympic year behind us, it would be nice to see the start of some successful combinations for the future," she said yesterday.

The number of spectators could be increased this year, since the new sponsors, Chubb Insurance, are inviting their 300 UK employees and several thousand policy holders.

An upgraded course of 26 cross-country fences will await the riders, who are expected to include two leading Britons: Kristina Gifford and William Fox-Pitt. There are seven entirely new obstacles and, though alternatives will be included, Rowsell said it will not be possible to "creep round using all the slow routes".

Henman on the road to recovery

Tennis

Tim Henman is on the comeback trail after missing last weekend's Davis Cup defeat by Zimbabwe following an operation on his elbow. The British No 1 expects to be fit for Wimbledon which starts on 23 June, although he has yet to begin full training.

The 22-year-old said: "It has been a frustrating few weeks for me. Obviously having an operation does interrupt things, but it's definitely improving so hopefully I'll be able to get back on the court. It's just a question of waiting and seeing really. I'll just have to see how my elbow reacts

when I start practising again and I'll take it from there."

Asked on Radio 5 Live if he would be fit for Wimbledon, he said: "I hope so." Henman will be keen to return in time for the French Open which begins in May, a month before Wimbledon.

The British No 7 Danny Sapsford fought back from losing the opening set to defeat the American Doug Flach convincingly, 6-7, 6-2, 6-0, in the first round of the Hong Kong Open yesterday.

The Davis Cup player from Weybridge had only made the first round after beating Lars Wahlgren, of Sweden, 6-4, 6-2 in the final qualifying round.

Sapsford had overcome Russia's Vladimir Malozhukov, who retired at 6-3, 3-4 down, and Australian Andrew Kratzmann 6-1, 6-1 in the first two qualifying rounds.

American Chanda Rubin scored the first upset of the Basle-Lomb Championships with a 4-6, 7-6 first-round victory over the 10th seed Barbara Rausch of Austria.

Jennifer Capriati rebounded from a 5-3 down in the first set to capture a 7-6, 6-2 first-round match over 73rd-ranked Catalina Cristea of Romania. The victory sets up an all-American second-round contest between the 27th-ranked Capriati and the third seed Monica Seles today.

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The Scots were set a daunting target of 244 from their 50 overs today after yet another rain-interrupted day's play in Kuala Lumpur.

Alex Ritchie, the general manager of the Scottish Cricket Union, said: "It is a substantial total but it can be done. You expect good scores at this stage of the tournament and although it's a hard target it is achievable."

The Scots need Malaysian weather to co-operate. Under tournament rules, if the match was abandoned Bangladesh

who would go through to the final as they won their group.

After the team betting second have faced 20 overs the tie is decided on run-rate, so the Scots would have to score at about five runs an over throughout the innings to ensure victory should the rain intervene.

Ritchie said: "I don't want to comment on tactics but, of course we're going to have to try and score at a rate of 4.90 an over. Hopefully, the game will start on time tomorrow and we should know by early on Wednesday morning. It's becoming a bit of a nuisance in many ways but you can't do anything about the weather."

Neath in fear of the drop

Rugby Union

Darryl Jones, the Neath coach, fears that one of the most progressive player development schemes in Welsh rugby could be blown apart by next season's new eight-club premier division.

The League champions, Neath, are now battling against relegation after the Welsh Rugby Union general committee's decision to prune their 12-team top flight. Four sides will be demoted instead of two, as originally planned, with no promotion from the Second Division.

That could mean Neath's WRU-contracted internationals Steve Williams, John Davies and the Lion Barry Williams playing against lower-quality opposition from 16 August.

"I thought that we were in the process of developing players in Wales, but it seems we are not," said Jones, whose side are currently two points above ninth-placed Duanwau with demanding fixtures against Pontypridd, Swansea and Llanelli looming.

"I have a major development programme going on here, yet it seems that if we go down, then the Union might not give me a chance to continue it."

Jones has already found a notable ally in David Rees, coach of Second Division leaders Cross Keys. "They have the basis of a future Wales team at Neath, but what good is it going to do if they are playing in division two?" Rees asked.

"The Union will be praying that they don't go down, because if they do then it will mean the decision to cut the top flight to eight clubs will have backfired on them."

The general committee's plan was ratified by member clubs last Sunday, who voted 206 to 147 at a special general meeting in Cardiff. But the Second Division combinations meet later this week, with Cross Keys official Alan Talbot warning that strike action may be considered in protest at the controversial change.

Cayard lures White into EF syndicate

Sailing

Paul Cayard has lured the navigator of Roes Field's 1994 Whitbread-winning 60-footer Yamah, New Zealander Nick White, to join his EF Langauge, the all-male crew in the EF syndicate, as the last major signing for the 1997-98 race, writes Stuart Alexander.

Cayard took over the job of skippering EF when Lawrie Smith left to join Silk Cut and has spent much time re-assembling a crew to fill the gaps created by those who defected with Smith.

White joins Magnus Olsson and Klas Nylof of Sweden, Stevie Erickson, Kim Worthington and Josh Bekley, of the United States, Curia Blewitt of Canada, Francesco de Angelis and Lorenzo Mazzia of Italy, Justin Clougher of Australia and Mark Christensen of New Zealand.

Baseball

AMERICAN LEAGUE: Detroit 10, Minnesota 3; New York Yankees 5, Anaheim 3; Oakland 6, Boston 2; Cleveland 6, Seattle 3.

NATIONAL LEAGUE: Chicago 13, Cincinnati 2; Los Angeles 3, New York Mets 2 (5 innings); San Francisco 4, Philadelphia 3.

AMERICAN LEAGUE: Baltimore 5, Boston 1; New York Yankees 5, Toronto 3; Detroit 6, Cleveland 3; Oakland 6, Seattle 3.

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Master and mate

Andy Farrell on an Augusta return
for Norman and Faldo, page 25

sport

Mercer keeps faith
Phil Shaw meets the goalkeeper
with a sense of tradition, page 26

United aim to silence roar of the Ruhr

Football

GLENN MOORE
reports from Dortmund

Dancing in the streets of Dortmund this afternoon, silence in the seats of the Westfalenstadion tonight. That is Manchester United's dual ambition for today, their most important day in European competition for nearly 30 years.

The Premiership leaders, and an estimated 4,000 fans, are in the heart of the Ruhr for United's first European Championship Cup semi-final since 1969 when, as the holders, they lost to Milan. They have since won the European Cup-Winners' Cup, in

1991, but in terms of prestige, profit and a place in history this game dwarfs even the final of that competition.

United's date with destiny begins at noon as the main phalanx of the travelling support, including 500 ticketless fans, rolls into the city. In an enterprising approach, Dortmund are staging a "fans gathering" in the medieval Aftermarkt Square. It will be the 16th such street party. Dortmund supporters' close ties with Celtic stem from two of them, but it will be the first with an England team.

As the evening falls, the spotlight will move to the Westfalenstadion on the southern

outskirts. Paul Lambert, Dortmund's Scottish midfielder, regards it as the most intimidating venue in Europe but United should feel happier than at Galatasaray. The ground, like Old Trafford, has recently been extended to 55,000 and there is no running track.

United are in confident mood. Everyone is fit, the second leg at Old Trafford is up their sleeve, and their opponents are weakened by injury and suspension. The bullish mood was underlined when Peter Schmeichel suggested the current team would defeat the 1968 European Cup winners 10-0.

"I'm not denying anything the United teams of the past have

achieved," Schmeichel said, "but I am part of the greatest United team of all time. If we played the '68 team we would win 10-0. Since the Sixties the pace of the game is so much faster. Just look at the old videos and you see the space they have and the time on the ball. I'm not saying they were not a great team for their time but we probably play at twice the speed." Having made the same point in the wake of last month's 4-0 win over Porto, this correspondent can only agree.

The speed of the modern game has put more pressure on referees and that was Alex Ferguson's prime concern. United, like Dortmund, have sev-

players on a yellow card - one booking from suspension - and Ferguson said: "It is important that the referee does not fall for the European tendency to go down whenever they are touched."

Ferguson, apparently forgetting that David Beckham got an opponent booked by diving in an earlier round, added: "This gamesmanship is not something English players like but we have a different culture. We tend not to go to the ref crying for a card to be given. That is a black part of German culture and Dortmund have their bit of it."

"The referee needs to be fair and strong as I won't be

telling them not to tackle, to tip-toe around as I did in Porto. We will be competing. That is not a problem if we are disciplined."

The referee is an English-speaking Russian, Nikolai Levnikov, who officiated Liverpool's recent match in Bram. He booked Steve Harkness for a "stiff challenge", but failed to see the Norwegian club's goalkeeper haul down Robbie Fowler after the England striker had dribbled past him.

While Ferguson wants United to "express themselves" and seek "penetration", the contest is between United's defence, unbeaten for more than five hours in Europe, and Dortmund's attack, the competi-

tion's top scorers with 18 goals in eight games. They also have the best accuracy rating with more than two-thirds of their shots on target compared to less than half of United's.

United will probably play Ronnie Johnson in midfield to track the run of Andy Möller, who, like Stéphane Chapuisat and Karlheinz Riedle is expected to play despite recent injury. Definitely out are Matthias Sammer (suspended) and Ibrahim Tanko (injured), Julio Cesar, Steffen Freund and Jürgen Kohler are doubtful.

Dortmund remain formidable and this first leg is unlikely to be conclusive; nor will it be goalless, however. United

need to score and silence the Dortmund roar.

United's European record: 44-22-22 (goals, wins, draws, losses). Dortmund's record: 44-22-22 (goals, wins, draws, losses). United's record: 44-22-22 (goals, wins, draws, losses). Dortmund's record: 44-22-22 (goals, wins, draws, losses).

Nils Liedholm, the great old lion of Italian football, has been brought out of retirement to take temporary charge of Roma. The appointment of the 74-year-old, silver-haired Swede to his fourth spell at the club came after the Argentinean Carlos Bianchi was dismissed. Liedholm, nicknamed "The Barba", retired in 1992 when he left his job at Verona.

Publicity produces National swing by viewers

Greg Wood finds that figures for BBC's coverage of Aintree reflect raised interest

The belief that there is no such thing as bad publicity received a striking endorsement yesterday when the BBC released preliminary viewing figures for the rescheduled Grand National. Estimates indicate that almost 12 million viewers tuned in at 5pm on Monday to watch Britain's most famous steeplechase, significantly more than 12 months ago when the race was staged in its usual slot on Saturday afternoon.

The confusion surrounding this year's National, postponed for 48 hours after two bomb threats for which the IRA yesterday admitted responsibility, thus appears to have raised the profile of the event still further.

The 1996 race attracted 11.2 million viewers, a relatively disappointing figure for a contest which for many years pushed the Cup final into second place in the annual list of top-rated sporting occasions. This year's running, won easily by Lord Gyllene, had the largest audience of any sporting event so far this year.

"This is a massive figure for a Grand National rescheduled and restaged at such short notice," Brian Barwick, head of sport at the BBC, said yesterday. "It underlines the importance of the event to the British viewing public and we are delighted to have been able to bring the drama of this great event to the screen."

Charles Barnett, clerk of the course at Aintree, said that the organisers were "thrilled by the news of these truly exceptional figures. This illustrates



Grand celebration: Lord Gyllene greets well-wishers and the media at his Shropshire stable yesterday

Photograph: Robert Hallam

the support the Grand National receives from the public."

Lord Gyllene himself enjoyed the traditional post-National parade for the media yesterday, at the Shropshire stable of Steve Brookshaw, his trainer. He is unlikely to appear in public again until the autumn, since Brookshaw be-

lieves that "three four-mile races is plenty for one year".

The chaser's main target next season seems sure to be the National once again, and the bookmakers Coral yesterday claimed that they have had several enquiries about the 20-1 which they offer against a repeat success for Lord Gyllene

in April 1998. Betting on the National without knowing the weight a runner will be carrying would normally be lunacy, but such was the manner of Lord Gyllene's 25-length win that some punters clearly believe he would have won with an extra two stone in his saddle, and might do so next year.

Tooy Dobbin, his jockey, spent yesterday recovering from post-race celebrations which kept him from his bed until 7am on Tuesday. "There was a surprise party in my local pub," he told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme yesterday, "and then the first call of the day arrived at 6.45."

Soon afterwards, another invitation arrived which confirmed his temporary status as one of the most famous sportsmen in Britain - when the balls start to roll for tonight's National Lottery draw, it will be Tooy Dobbin who pushes the button.

Racing, page 25

Wales FA set to decide Gould's future

RUPERT METCALF

Bobby Gould's status as the manager of Wales may come to an abrupt end after an emergency Football Association of Wales management committee meeting next Tuesday.

Gould's position is under threat after the Bolton striker, Nathan Blake, accused him of racist comments and refused to play in the 2-1 World Cup qualifying defeat by Belgium on Easter Saturday.

Blake's allegations will be the only matter on the agenda at Tuesday's meeting, which will submit a report to the EAW general council the following day, but it may provide an excuse for Gould's critics within the FAW to launch a campaign for a change of manager. Wales are out of contention in their World Cup section and Gould is known to be unpopular with some senior players.

England's Football Association has released a video to support its challenge to host the 2006 World Cup. The launch of the promotional film, endorsed by the former England striker Gary Lineker, comes nine days before UEFA, European football's governing body, meets in Geneva to assess the rival English and German campaigns.

In the video, British football heroes of past and present are placed alongside some of the Premiership's Continental imports in a montage demonstrating the rich history of the game in this country. The FA introduces viewers to "The Home of Football" as stirring music, both classical and pop, including last summer's "Three Lions" anthem, creates an upbeat

mood. The commentary declares that Euro 96 had "triumphantly confirmed that when you give English football a job to do, it does it well".

While the video will not be shown to UEFA officials next week, it will be distributed throughout the world to boost the FA's case in the three years before the final decision is made by FIFA in 2000. UEFA has stressed that it will not make a final decision next week, on which campaign to back.

Harry Redknapp, the West Ham manager, has criticised the campaign by Alex Ferguson, his Manchester United counterpart, and others to extend the Premiership season beyond 11 May. "I would like to see the season finish on the same day - I think that's important," Redknapp said. "I wouldn't want to see some teams finish on the Sunday, then suddenly other teams play on the Tuesday or Wednesday. I think that would end up a bit farcical."

The Football League yesterday urged the Premiership's top managers to "give our youngsters a chance" following George Graham's complaint that British football was suffering from a lack of quality.

The Leeds manager had called on club chairmen in both England and Scotland to "invest heavily" in the future of the game after his side and Blackburn were booed off the field following a drab goalless draw at Elland Road on Monday.

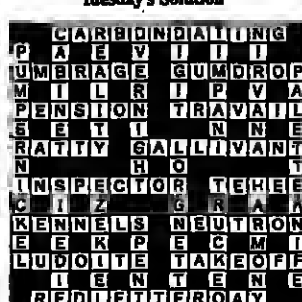
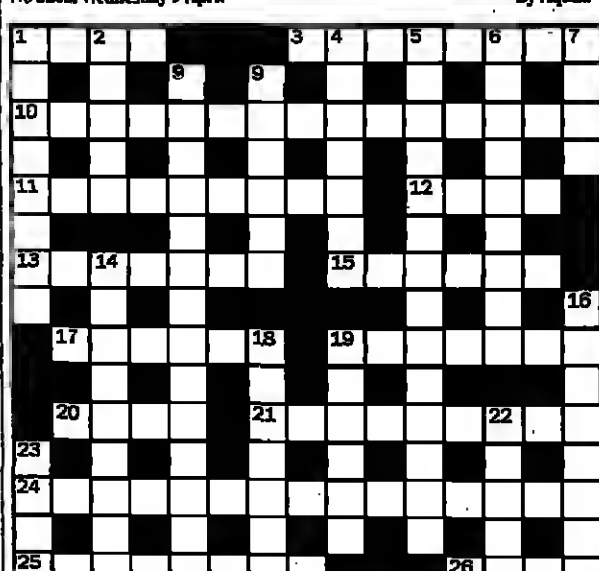
However, a Football League spokesman, Chris Hull, said: "Obviously everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but we believe that there is an abundance of talent on show every week in the Football League."

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No 3268, Wednesday 9 April

By Aquila

Thursday's Solution



- ACROSS**
- Elegant dress almost transported wife wearing it (4)
 - Bishop enduring Tooting, say? (8)
 - Wild yodelling-cry as a half-holiday is announced (3-7,3)
 - The case for the comprehensives (9)
 - Bit charged, visiting a Hebridean island (4)
 - Tricky false start? (7)
 - Gloomy underground cavern in here, husky? (6)
 - Less showy mate of a male found in enclosure (6)
 - Twenties' architectural style traced out with circle (3,4)
 - Car fashionable, to reverse on motorway? (4)

- Hurricanes, for example, distort country roads (9)
- Unorthodox poet in interplay with minister at full power (15)
- Ringing so, tanner is tossed (3)
- Light building in Slough (4)
- Merry unaccompanied singing by unspecified number (8)
- Thruway price? (5)
- Country way to get round drop in a pasta dish (7)
- Feeling over Italy, perhaps, of emotionalism (14)
- Way to hind apprentice wearing false smile (9)

- Doll's hospital, too, this? (4)
- Lab worker supports ropy sort of rocket manufacturer (14)
- Universal hall go wild? (6)
- Miserable people in laboratories? (9)
- Strahimic gaffer observed. (4,4)
- Ben worn out, having just arrived (3,4)
- Pilots, for example, remain organised (6)
- Hospital orderly above and below (5)
- Spring's famous incentive? (4)

Professionalism may be 'disastrous' for Scotland

Rugby Union

The introduction of professional club rugby in Scotland could have potentially disastrous consequences for the game, according to an independent financial review conducted by Deloitte & Touche, a leading firm of accountants. It warns that some clubs could face deficits of more than £800,000 in just three years.

That figure even allows for a high level of success in domestic competition for some clubs as well as European games and television revenue.

Graham Watson, a partner with Deloitte & Touche, said: "The bigger English and Welsh rugby union clubs benefit from significant television revenues and gate receipts that Scottish domestic club rugby cannot match at present."

There are also concerns that even though a club may initially benefit from television sponsorship, they may fail to qualify for Europe they could be left with massive wage bills.

"This could have potentially disastrous consequences for the rugby club and could lead to significant instability in Scottish rugby," the review states.

Watson added: "Our work has produced no evidence to

suggest that Scotland can support a league of fully professional clubs which can compete financially with other major European clubs."

Fred McLeod, president of the Scottish Rugby Union, said: "Quite simply, if we are to have full-time professional rugby in Scotland, there is no alternative to it being at district level. That is what this debate should be about: looking forward to the reality of professional rugby and not looking backwards to amateur or semi-professional rugby."

"That is the only way we can hope for international, let alone European, success, an inescapable fact that seems to have become lost in the current debate."

The report also suggests that professionalism would initially mean a small number of top-level clubs dominating Scottish rugby, with other teams finding it increasingly difficult to compete.

In England, the Bath full-back Jon Callard has described a possible move to the Courage League Fourth Division champions, Worcester, as "challenging and exciting". Callard, however, stressed no decision had yet been made on whether he would leave the Recreation Ground for an expected

player-coaching role at Shrews.

The former England international had further talks with Worcester's backer, Cecil Duckworth, on Monday. "It is a challenging and exciting prospect," the 31-year-old said. "But huge negotiations need to take place between both sides and there's no prospect of a decision yet."

The Bristol captain, Martin Corry, could also be on the move, although he has played down speculation of a possible transfer to Saracens. The London club have approached Bristol for permission to speak with their 23-year-old England A flanker.

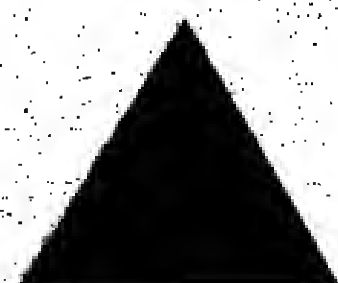
"He is a good player," Saracens' team-manager, Mike Scott, said. "He would play fairly regularly for us if we achieved our goal of European rugby next season."

Saracens boast considerable back-row resources, having added South Africa's World Cup-winning captain, Francois Pienaar, alongside the England flanker Richard Hill and the uncapped No 8 Tony Diprose.

Corry, who has 14 months remaining of his Bristol contract, ruled out immediate transfer negotiations: "I have an important job to do at Bristol as captain, which is to help the club avoid relegation," he said.

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And a beer to go with it.



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